

**THE FOURTH WORLD :
ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND FEMINISM**

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a framework for the discussion of Aboriginal women's oppression, one which will reflect Indigenous women's perspectives. It is suggested here that feminism often assumes that all women, cross-culturally, share the same oppression and that this assumption may be false.

The writer believes that the Indigenous "Circle of Life" philosophy more appropriately embodies Aboriginal women's conceptions of human nature, their political philosophy, and their strategy for social change and liberation.

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DEDICATION

WUTTUNEE

The funeral service of Mrs. Bella Wuttunee of Red Pheasant was held August 25 on the Red Pheasant Reserve with Rev. Victor Brass, Anglican missionary, officiating.

Her death at the age of 82 occurred Aug. 22 in University Hospital, Saskatoon.

Matriarch of a large family, pillar of strength and loved and respected by friends and relatives, she was born March 4, 1898 at Battleford when this area was part of the North West Territories. She attended Battleford Industrial School as a girl and learned the art of homemaking that was to remain with her throughout her lifetime. Expert at sewing, baking, hooking rugs and needlework, she was renowned for her quilting. She made beautiful quilts for all members of her family.



An active member of the Anglican Church at Red Pheasant she had been involved in church work up until April of this year when her health failed. She was a member of the W.A., then of the Anglican Church Women. Bella Wuttunee had a beautiful soprano voice and was soloist and led the choir at worship services. Shortly before her death, she sang Lord Keep Me Safe This Night, her voice true, though feeble.

In earlier years, she was active in the Homemakers

Club. The community honored her recently when she was named Mother of the Year for Cando and district.

An avid gardener, this was the first year she hadn't grown a large garden.

Part of Battleford's history, Bella was always proud of the fact she had been chosen to present a bouquet of flowers to Sir Wilfrid Laurier on his visit in 1910.

Predeceased by her husband, George, (band chief at one time) in June 1942, she is survived by sons Douglas, George, Cecil and Oliver Wuttunee, all of Red Pheasant; daughters Bertha Soonias of Red Pheasant, Lena McMaster of Battleford, Mabel Laliberte of Asquith and Grace Ouellette, North Battleford; also 50 grandchildren, 61 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.

Burial took place in Red Pheasant Reserve. Sallows and McDonald Funeral Home Ltd. was in charge of arrangements.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFN	Assembly of First Nations
AWCS	Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan
BILL C-31	An Act to Amend the <u>Indian Act</u> , the 1985 amendment to the 1951 <u>Indian Act</u> (all previous legislation on Indians prior to 1951 was revised and consolidated into the 1951 <u>Indian Act</u>).
CAP	The Congress of Aboriginal People
FSIN	Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations
IRIW	Indian Rights for Indian Women
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
MNS	Metis Nations of Saskatchewan
NAC	National Action Committee
NWAC	National Women's Association of Canada
RCSW	Royal Commission on the Status of Women
Section 12(1)(B)	Refers to those sections of the 1951 <u>Indian Act</u>
STIWC	Saskatchewan Treaty Indian Women's Council
UFNHI	Urban First Nations Healing Initiative
UN	United Nations

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the recent emergence of the Canadian Aboriginal women's movement, its relationship to the broader feminist movement, and the applicability and appropriateness of contemporary feminist theories as frameworks for the analysis of Aboriginal women's legal, political, and socio-economic status. This is an exploratory study and does not suggest that the results will be representative of Aboriginal women in general. Aboriginal women have often been the objects of researchers for academic purposes in various disciplines; however, the social realities and dynamics of the Aboriginal women's world have often been ignored or misrepresented, if not entirely misinterpreted, and Aboriginal women have often been viewed and treated as static remnants of the fur trade. The status of Aboriginal women varies due to several factors under colonialism; it is the writer's intent to explore these factors from Aboriginal women's perspectives based on their experiences and social realities as colonized persons.

It is suggested here that feminism often assumes that all women, cross-culturally, share the same oppression and that this assumption may be false. Many contemporary Euro-Canadian feminists seem preoccupied with the concept of male domination as the sole or main source of oppression for all women and quite often disregard racism and "national" oppression as contributing sources of oppression for Aboriginal women and women of colour.

A crucial question is, do Aboriginal women perceive themselves as oppressed members within their own Aboriginal societies because of gender, or as oppressed members within the larger and more dominant Euro-Canadian immigrant settler society, or a combination thereof? It is the writer's position that the concepts of racism and Eurocentrism have not been adequately addressed by feminist writers analyzing the status of Indigenous women in the global community. The writer believes that the Indigenous Circle of Life philosophy more appropriately embodies Aboriginal women's conceptions of human nature, their political philosophy, and strategy for social change and liberation. It must be noted that the terms, "Indian, Native, Aboriginal, Indigenous, and First Nations" have been used interchangeably in the discussion of Canada's Aboriginal inhabitants. The term "Indigenous" has been adopted by the United Nations as a working definition to describe colonized peoples globally (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, [IWGIA] 1989, 1990, p. 231). The other terms have been used by scholars and Aboriginal people themselves to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

As colonized persons, Canada's Indigenous women may view their oppression differently from those of middle-class Euro-Canadian feminists. As such, many of the concerns and issues confronting Indigenous women may not always coincide with feminist theory or interests. The concepts of racism and sexism have not been separated by feminists in their analysis of Indigenous women's oppression, and it is often assumed all women

are oppressed because of sexism. It is also important to note that Aboriginal women do not live in isolation from Euro-Canadian society even if they do reside on reserves. One implication of this non-isolation is that they have become exposed to national gender debates through the media and at public meetings.

It is hoped that Aboriginal women will benefit from the research by providing them with an opportunity to express their social realities and experiences and as contributors in the formulation of theory. Key questions to be addressed in this study will be: (1) To what extent do Aboriginal women understand, experience and articulate their oppression? (2) To what extent do colonized women perceive racism as the source of their oppression? (3) To what extent do Aboriginal women view male domination within their own Aboriginal societies as the sole source of the oppression? (4) How do Aboriginal women articulate racism and gender oppression?

There are six chapters to this thesis. Chapter One includes the introduction, purpose, scope and objectives of the study. Chapter Two examines contemporary feminist theories and methodology. Chapter Three is subdivided. The first part provides a background of the origins of the Aboriginal women's movement in Canada and the second part examines various theories on Aboriginal women's oppression. Chapter Four describes the methodology and data. Chapter Five is a summary discussion of the research and the formulation of an alternative theory. The "Fourth World" perspective perhaps more appropriately describes

and explains Canada's Aboriginal women's oppression, their conception of human nature, and a political strategy for social change and liberation. Chapter Six forms the conclusion.

2.0 Contemporary Feminist Theory

The backbone of contemporary feminist theory consists of four main schools of thought which inform the discussion in most feminist writings. For the purposes of this thesis, Jaggar's (1988) approach will be followed, one which Holland (1990) describes in the following manner:

In Feminist Politics and Human Nature, Jaggar defines, compares, and criticizes four 'schools' of (Anglo-American) feminist political thought-- liberal, Marxist, radical, and socialist--and correlates each with a specific doctrine about what constitutes human personhood (p.6).

2.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is grounded in the basic moral and political values of liberalism: justice, equality and freedom for all. Liberal feminists do not challenge existing institutions but rather see reform in legislation as a solution. Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (1988) state that:

Liberal feminism then is consistent with the dominant American ethos in its basic acceptance of America's institutions and culture, its reformist orientation, and its appeal to the values of individualism, choice, freedom and equality of opportunity (p.418).

Jaggar (1988) also believes that liberalism and capitalism complement each other:

Historically, the liberal tradition in political theory has always been associated with the capitalist economic system. Liberal political theory emerged with the rise of capitalism, it expressed the needs of the developing capitalist class and the liberal values of autonomy and self-fulfillment have often been linked with the right to private property (p.34).

Liberty, then, is the guiding principle behind liberalism. Every individual should have the freedom to do what is good for

that individual; every human possesses the capacity to reason for themselves as to what is good for them. This right to self-fulfillment should not be in any way restricted by those in authority, but rather every individual should have an equal opportunity to achieve that right, regardless of their sex, once the age of reason has been reached.

Jaggar (1988) and Holland (1990), however, believe that there are limitations to this "abstract individualism". In particular, they criticize the notion that all individuals can attain fulfillment despite their circumstances and environment. Choice is not always an option. As well, they believe that liberalism is male-biased and has a middle-class perspective. As well, the tendency for individuals to be egoistic has been recognized by some theorists, but most believe that individuals do have the mental capacity to refrain:

Only a few liberal philosophers, such as Hobbes and Bentham, claim that people always act in what they perceive to be their own self-interest. Most of the other major liberal theorists, such as Locke, Kant, Mill, and Rawls, conceive people as able to act on a moral principle of impartiality; which requires them to refrain from placing their own selfish interests before the interests of others (Jaggar, 1988, p. 30).

Liberal feminists believe that both men and women have the same mental capacity but that women have been unable to reach their full potential because of their role in the home and family. Liberal feminists believe that the sex roles perpetuated by the family and public learning institutions intensify this problem for women, and that men have more opportunities to

exercise and attain their full mental capacity because they are not confined to the home. According to Jaggar, what the liberal feminists advocate is an androgynous model of society.

2.2 Marxist Feminism

Unlike Marxist feminism, liberal feminism does not challenge the capitalist system. In fact, it appears to support capitalism and the status quo by seeking only reform. Jaggar (1988) contrasts Marxism with liberal feminism:

Contrary to liberal theory, which is associated historically with capitalism and indeed often provides a rationale for it, Marxism offers a devastating critique of the capitalist system. Marxism charges, moreover, that the liberal theory employed to justify the bourgeois revolutions is mere egalitarian rhetoric, serving only to disguise the deep inequalities that inevitably characterize all societies divided by class (p. 51).

According to some authors, "Marxian feminism brings together Marxian class analysis and feminist social protest" (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1988, p. 418) to explain gender inequality. However, Jaggar believes there are some problems in using Marxist theory because of its ambiguity. According to Jaggar, Marx and his various interpreters and revisers often disagree as to what Marx actually said.

The rise of capitalism was seen to alter the value of woman's work as it was now divided into a separate sphere from the man's, and into private and public spheres. Kronemann (1981) points out that, "Inherent in this argument, and in most Marxist writing, is a sharp dichotomy between the family and society, between 'personal' and 'public' life, of which only the latter is seen to really concern socialists" (p. 223). This argument is

thematic in Marxist feminist theories. According to Chafetz (1988):

Marxist-feminism recognizes that patriarchy predates capitalism. It is seen as rooted in the institution of the family. In various ways, theorists in this tradition suggest that women's childbearing and lactating functions affect the division of labor between the sexes, leaving women a preponderance of the domestic and childbearing tasks, regardless of what other labor they perform. Therefore, the roots of gender inequality are to be found in a sexual division of labor in which males provide much or all of the family subsistence. This division of labor is posited to arise with the dawning of private property and to be seriously exacerbated by the particular system of private property known as capitalism. (Chafetz 1988:37)

Theorists in this tradition believe that women's roles were divided on the basis of sex because childbearing and lactation prevented them from working outside the home. Their role in procreation and caregiving placed them in the home, in the private sphere, while the men were seen to be outside this realm, in the public sphere. This type of theorizing appears to be compatible with the views of Marx and Engels. However, Marx has been often criticized by feminists for his sex-blindness and male-bias in his theory of social oppression; his "working class" does not take women's labour in the home into account as part of the production process. Engels seems to be the more favored point of departure and, as Jaggar's (1988) analysis of Marxist feminism suggests, "Engels' account of the origins of women's subordination has been of tremendous historical importance. Most Marxist and much feminist theory has taken this into account as its starting point, . . . [and] together with Marx's . . . reveals . . . important Marxist assumptions about women's nature"

(p.64). Engels' claim that the family unit and monogamous marriages are responsible for the subjugation of women appears to be what feminists echo. As well, the notion of class associated with the rise of capitalism is common among Marxist feminists. Thus, what Marxist feminists use is a theory of social oppression to explain gender inequality:

The solution for gender inequality is the destruction of class oppression. This destruction will come through revolutionary action by a united wage-earning class, including both men and women. Any direct mobilization of women against men is counterrevolutionary, because it divides the potentially revolutionary working class (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1988, pp. 420-421).

According to Marxist theorists, in a capitalist society people are oppressed by classism and not necessarily because of gender. The by-product of a class system is gender inequality. However, though theorists of this tradition may be able to explain the causes of gender inequality, they do not explain why women in the upper classes tend to exploit women in the lower classes, that is, the exploitation and alienation of women by women. This type of class exploitation is also a by-product of the class system and is probably an experience that is more common to women of different races, a reality that has been overlooked.

2.3 Radical Feminism

Radical feminists believe that patriarchy, with its pattern of domination and subordination, is the cause of women's oppression. Patriarchy tends to place the male in positions of authority over the female. The concept of male dominance is central to radical feminists. Extreme emotions, and even

violence, play a significant part in the maintenance of this system.

However, Sydie (1988) is of the opinion that, despite the attack on patriarchy, much of feminist theory has not utilized Weber's analysis. According to Sydie, "Weber's analysis of patriarchy and power has been largely ignored in recent feminist theory. Part of the explanation may be his association of patriarchy with a particular form of power - traditional power, which, some have assumed, has an historical rather than current relevance to feminist issues and concerns" (p.51).

In most feminist writings, The Second Sex, by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) is a major reference and often is a point of departure for the discussion of radical feminism. According to Sydie, de Beauvoir questions why women have accepted their position, "because one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (Sydie, 1988, p. 139). The relations between the sexes are seen as central to the subordination and oppression of women. Male dominance in sexual relations, in other words what happens in the bedroom, and acts of male violence and abuse, alternative forms of reproduction, lesbianism and sisterhood form the basis of radical feminism. There are some concerns about radical feminists' prescriptions for women's liberation. Women's communes and lesbianism may liberate women from male dominance, but not all women condone or desire such living arrangements.

2.4 Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminists borrow from and combine radical feminism and Marxism to describe and explain gender oppression. These oppressionist theorists believe that patriarchy and male dominance are the sources of women's oppression. From Jaggar (1988), Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (1988), and MacKinnon (1989), we learn that this synthesis has not been fully developed, and one which has been referred to as an "unhappy marriage" in feminist writings. According to MacKinnon:

Attempts to create a synthesis between Marxism and feminism, termed socialist-feminism, have recognized neither the separate integrity of each theory nor the depth of antagonism between them. ...Most attempts at synthesis try to integrate or explain the appeal of feminism by incorporating issues feminism identifies as central -- the family, housework, sexuality, reproduction, socialization, personal life -- within an essentially unchanged Marxian analysis (p. 11).

There does not appear to be much difference between Marxist feminism and socialist feminism as both combine Marxism and feminism. In his analysis of race, class and gender, Bourgeault (1989) also advances this position (p. 88).

However, Bourgeault (1989) challenges the universality of patriarchy as a system of male domination, as some feminists have posited. As well, Bourgeault claims that, "unlike gender oppression, which is rooted in pre-capitalist societies and the transition to early class formations, race oppression is closely linked to the rise of capitalist relations of exploitation" (p. 89). Bourgeault is critical of what he terms "Western" feminism's assumptions about male domination and their

theoretical approaches because of the tendency of feminists to treat male domination as a distinctly separate and hierarchical system. Bourgeault's position is well-taken because the main criticism from women of colour is that feminists tend to ignore racism or treat it separate from sexism and classism in their analysis of gender oppression.

2.5 Critique of Feminist Theory and Methodology

The publication from which Bourgeault's (1989) article "Race, class and gender: colonial domination of Indian Women" was taken includes ten other authors and covers a wide range of issues. Several contributors are women of colour who criticize the feminist movement for marginalizing their concerns and side-stepping the issue of racism. For example, Thornhill (1989) states that ". . . woman has become synonymous with White Women, whereas Women of Colour, such as myself, are seen as Others, as nonpersons, as dehumanized beings -- or sometimes not seen at all" (p. 27):

We Black Women, it would appear, have no role in the finalized script of Canadian Women's Studies. We have no speaking parts. Despite our unique experience of Triple Oppression--on the counts of race, sex, and class--and despite our special survival skills, which are indispensable cornerstones to the evolving documentary of female experiences, the Women's Movement has failed to generate any in-depth analysis of Black female experience (p. 27).

Thornhill believes that the history of Black women in America and their struggles for survival have not been recognized as part of women's experiences.

Furthermore, race and sex cannot be taken as separate issues in the analysis of women's oppression, which Thornhill believes has been the case in White feminist theorizing:

White women insist that sex and race are two separate issues. And yet, in the words of Black feminist writer, Bell Hooks: "At the moment of my birth, two factors determined my destiny, my having been born Black, and my having been born female." Clearly, race and sex are two immutable facets of human identity and the struggles to end them are naturally entwined (p. 28).

hook's(1981)analysis of the history of the feminist movement in the United States and the relationship with the Black women's movement shows that indeed Black women have been excluded from the broader White women's movement.

If they were included, Black women often remained segregated and marginalized at these meetings. hooks (1981) believes American white feminists tend to promote their own interests:

At the beginning of the 20th century, white women suffragists were eager to advance their own cause at the expense of black people. In 1903, ...a southern suffragist urged the enfranchisement of white women on the grounds that it "would insure the immediate and durable white supremacy." (p. 128).

American White women were outraged that Black men rather than White women would be given the right to vote and, in fact, did not advocate that voting rights be extended to include all women. hooks further believes both the black civil rights movement and the women's rights movement have become weak, if not dead. She argues that collective feminist activism is not possible if only one group advances its rights and ignores others. She insists that American white feminists have achieved a certain degree of social equality but have not advanced the

plight of Afro-American women. Jealousy between the two women's groups as to who is chosen "for male favor" (hooks, 1981, p. 156) is believed to be one cause.

Another antagonism, according to hooks, is that slavery advanced White women's status and domination over both Black men and women, a status that White women did not want to relinquish. hooks is disillusioned with the racism and classism prevalent in the women's movement and cautions that unless these issues are dealt with, the women's movement will remain a "sham" as it will only be representative of White women's desires. Equal pay with men will not necessarily mean liberation if racism and classism are not addressed. For women of color, sexism, racism and classism are intertwined and cannot be treated separately in the analysis of women's oppression.

In the Canadian context, the most vocal groups by women of colour appear to be Black feminists, Asian American feminists, and other immigrant women who feel that their concerns are being ignored and marginalized by the broader feminist movement. A detailed critique of feminist theory by Aboriginal women is almost non-existent. Within the American context, the problem facing Black feminists appears to be one of exclusion. In The Black Women Cross-Culturally, Steady (1981) has compiled the works of mainly (but not exclusively) Black women, to show the diversity of perspectives and roles in their respective societies. In this study, there is a section on the Black women's movement in the United States. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn

(1981:301-315) documents the history of this movement from 1830-1920. What is most profound in this report, which is well-documented by events, is the racial discrimination and exclusion experienced by Afro-American women in their attempts to get involved with the White feminist movement. There were several instances where Black feminists were asked not to attend certain conferences for fear they would jeopardize White women's demands for equality. In fact, they were often asked to sit in places reserved for Black women. These exclusionary tactics resulted in Black women forming their own women's groups or self-help groups with men because they did not get support from White women who were supposedly fighting for all women's liberation.

2.6 Summary

The major feminist theories, liberal, Marxist, radical and socialist, appear to form the background of discussion for many writers of feminism. Their, politics, conceptions of human nature, and ideas for social change grow from their critique of John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Freud and their ideas. Feminist theories are multi-disciplinary and appear to support the discipline of their choice. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to include all the variants, but broadly speaking, feminist theory has fallen into four main schools of thought.

Within the Canadian context, Wine and Ristock (1991) have attempted to summarize the feminist movement. According to them, there are two poles, the "institutionalized or mainstream face of feminism, and disengaged or grassroots organizing" (p. 7). The

poles range from the far left wing of radical lesbian feminism to the far right-wing group known as "R.E.A.L. (Realistic , Equal, Active and for Life) Women, a conservative, pro-life group opposed to virtually every aim of the women's movement" (p. 6). All other women's groups fall somewhere between these two poles.

Feminist writers themselves are divided as to what feminism means. In most writings, feminist theory and feminist activism are combined to describe feminism. The problem lies in the way feminism is defined. Is feminism an academic tradition or is it the history of women's activism or a combination of both? Mitchell and Oakley (1986), Wine and Ristock (1991), and Pierson and Cohen (1995) demonstrate the complexity of feminism in their attempts to describe the broader feminist movement. In most instances, their contributors combined feminist theory and women's activism to describe feminism. What is apparent in these writings is that the overall feminist movement does not appear to be a cohesive women's movement. For example, REAL Women and other conservative groups are perceived as "backlash" groups which are undermining the feminist movement. As well, racism within the feminist movement itself has also become an issue (see Pierson and Cohen 1995). In addition, women's activism in charity does not receive credit as humanitarian work in most feminist writings. How then can feminism be defined?

2.7 Defining Feminism

Definition

Just what does feminism mean? This question has been raised by several persons, including the writer. There does not seem to be a simple definition that would encompass what feminism stands for. Mitchell and Oakley (1986) edited What is Feminism?, a sequel to their 1976 edition of collected essays, Rights and Wrongs of Women. Eleven contributors addressed the question, what is feminism? Mitchell and Oakley state:

The contributors to both books are mostly activists, even initiators, of the women's liberation movement that started in the mid-sixties. At the outset, The Second Sex was the only major work of reference for most of us. Faced with de Beauvoir's analysis of women's lack of history, for some, it became a prime task to discover and create a history both for women and for their intellectual and practical struggle. ... Women had a natural unity in their biology, and feminism could ally itself safely, and, by definition, with all shapes and forms of validation of, and protest by women. It was self-referring -- by women for women, (pp. 1-2).

The women's liberationists, on the other hand, believed it was not possible to speak on behalf of all women simply because they were women, due to differences in women's backgrounds:

Emanating in diverse ways from some type of socialist or Marxist background, women's liberationists were unable to assume a common identity for women along a biological dividing line -- we needed a social definition and therefore a history (Mitchell and Oakley, 1986, p. 2).

According to Mitchell and Oakley, the rediscovery of women's past, their ideas, experiences, and material conditions, was compiled from a collection of essays and documented in Rights and Wrongs of Women (1976). In their sequel, What is Feminism? (1986), the same methodology was used in the search for feminism.

In both cases, the authors admit the search for a definition of feminism was problematic. There was a need to find a common ground that would unite the differences in women's perspectives, other than biology. Consequently, the name of the movement changed from a "women's liberation movement" to a "women's movement", associating itself with the early feminist struggles beginning in the 1800s. Thus, "[W]omen's liberationists took a sideways step closer to radical feminists and became 'feminists' despite the fact that at the outset many of us shared de Beauvoir's earlier resistance to the term" (Mitchell and Oakley, 1986, p. 2):

Feminism in the sixties and seventies has...been distinguished...by the deconstruction of any fixed meaning to the notion of 'woman'. If women cannot be fixed as an identity beyond the biological female, neither can feminism have a unified definition. In The Rights and Wrongs of Women we were looking for women; in What is Feminism?, for feminism. In both cases the ground changed to quicksand (pp. 2-3).

The difficulty in defining feminism is apparent and reflected in the contributors' essays. The contributors approached the question in various ways, theoretically and as an activity. Rosalind Delmar (1986) is the best source as she addresses the question directly. She believes that the terms "feminist" and "feminism" seem to have been taken as self-explanatory, a view she challenges. The images of feminism are often referred to in terms of style, looks, shapes, and in behavior appropriate for women, which Delmar questions. Delmar is of the belief that there can be a basic definition that may be applied to both feminists and non-feminists:

Many would agree that at the very least a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (p. 8).

While this definition would include feminists and non-feminists, it would not necessarily mean that these feminists were active. For example, the writer has noted in conversations with some Aboriginal women that some refer to their "feminist" side, yet do not consider themselves feminists. These "border-line" feminists (the writer's term) may share the same beliefs, according to this definition, but may have different connotations of "feminism" and "feminist". Delmar suggests "that it now makes more sense to speak of a plurality of feminism than of one" (p. 9). According to Delmar, the problem of definition is further compounded by the various feminist groups:

Recently the different meanings of feminism for different feminists have manifested themselves as a sort of sclerosis of the movement... . Instead of internal dialogue there is a naming of the parts; ...radical feminists, socialist feminists, Marxist feminists, lesbian separatists, women of colour, ...each group with its own carefully preserved sense of identity (p. 9).

The contributors cover a wide range of issues such as child abuse and child neglect, welfare, work, roles of motherhood, medicine, legal ideology, health concerns and issues, feminist theories, and the history of the British and American feminist movements to show what feminists have done to bring about social change for the betterment of women. The contributors were unable to arrive at a definition of feminism that would apply to all women's groups within the movement; instead what their contributions

amounted to was to document the different phases of feminism. In this sense, they have been successful in creating a history of feminism.

The diversity of women's groups and theoretical orientations in the women's movement makes it impossible to define what feminism is. There is also the question as to whether or not all feminists are necessarily women. It has been known that there are male supporters and sympathizers of certain women's issues, should they be called feminists?

What is feminism? The answer to the question remains ambiguous. Is it a matter of defining feminism or is it a matter of creating a history of feminism? Perhaps one of the contributors, Nancy Cott (1986), answers it the best:

Feminism is nothing if not paradoxical. It aims for individual freedoms by mobilizing sex solidarity. It acknowledges diversity among women while positing that women recognize their unity. It requires gender consciousness for its basis, yet calls for the elimination of prescribed gender roles (p. 49).

Feminists have reduced the concept of the term "woman" to one that has been socially constructed. Thus, a woman's biological make-up does not necessarily make her a woman, but rather it is the way society shapes and views her. Yet, despite this deconstruction of the concept of "woman", the terms "feminist" and "feminism" would imply that woman is indeed biologically different from a man. The paradox is, if it is a "women's" movement, then why is it necessary to deconstruct the concept? Many of us still believe that we are women because we are essentially different, biologically, from men. Therefore, the

feminists' deconstruction of the concept of 'woman' is confusing, if not paradoxical. Why is it necessary to eliminate gender roles yet at the same time use gender as a unifying force?

Aboriginal women hold various roles in their respective societies, as is evident in anthropological studies. Culture does play a role in shaping a particular society's view of what is appropriate behavior for females, but it also does so for the males, the children and the elderly. It is commonly understood in Indigenous societies that everything in nature has a purpose and place. This world view may not necessarily be documented as it is passed on through oral tradition and has survived for generations. As Aboriginal people, we believe that we do not need to scurry for a source of reference that will validate this knowledge as reliable evidence because Indigenous values and beliefs continue to be passed on through oral tradition in our everyday lives.

To disrupt the harmonious relationship and holistic view of nature and mankind through a denigration and denial of certain roles such as motherhood is an affront to Aboriginal women.

(Note responses in Primary Interviews, Appendix D) Aboriginal women cannot fit neatly into the feminists' conceptions of human nature because of different cultural values and beliefs, conflicting world views.

In summary, in its broadest terms, feminism can best be defined as a women's political movement beginning at the academic level that seeks to liberate all women from oppression and male

domination. Unfortunately, most feminist theories are incompatible with Aboriginal women's beliefs and theories of multi-oppression, with their conceptions of human nature, and with their strategies for liberation. It is also evident that there is a plurality of feminism within the broader feminist movement itself. Thus, feminism can be more appropriately described as a woman's academic movement that seeks to inform others of women's oppression through various theories and activities. Through this tradition, academic feminists hope to bring about social change for the liberation and betterment of women in general.

3.0 The Aboriginal Women's Movement

3.1 Background

Aboriginal women in Canada have had their own women's movement for almost as long as the broader feminist movement in Canada. However, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) did not become a national organization until 1974. The Aboriginal women's movement came to life when Aboriginal women became aware that they were discriminated against by Canada's Indian Act on the basis of race, gender, and marital status.

Two Aboriginal women's groups wanted the discriminatory legislation commonly known as Section 12(1)(b) of the revised 1951 Indian Act and their fight against it documented. Two distinct Aboriginal women's groups, Indian Rights for Indian Women (IRIW) and the Tobique women's group, have been instrumental in bringing this legal discrimination to the forefront. The membership of IRIW and their president, Jenny Margetts, asked the Advisory Council on the Status of Women for help to document the impact of this discriminatory federal law on Indian women. In response, Kathleen Jamieson produced a book, Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus (1978), which reviewed the various Indian Acts from 1830-1951. A group of thirteen women from the Tobique reserve in New Brunswick who were also actively involved in bringing about changes to the pre-1985 Indian Act asked Janet Silman to record their experiences and activism (Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out, 1987). Initially, the Tobique women's group began as a movement for

better housing and living conditions on their reserve. However, this issue developed into a "status" issue and Section 12 (1)(b) of the Indian Act came under attack. The activism of the Tobique women's group has also been documented by Shirley Bear (1991). The offending section of the Indian Act (Section 12 (1)(b) in the 1951 revision) discriminated against Indian women but not against Indian men for over a century. The law dates back to 1869:

The following persons are not entitled to be registered, namely . . . a woman who married a person who is not an Indian, unless that woman is subsequently the wife or widow of a person described in section 11.' (Jamieson, 1978, p. 8).

Indian men, however, could marry whom they pleased without penalty, and could confer their Indian status on their non-Indian spouses and subsequent offspring. This law has been a continuing source of contention and divisiveness amongst Indian women and Indian men. The rise of Native nationalism and activism coincided with the Canadian women's movement. Both were fighting oppression and striving for liberation.

Unfortunately, Jamieson (1978) does not provide a background of IRIW, one she claims was a national Indian women's organization. She summarizes the political climate at the time:

At the same time, however, as Indians in Canada were beginning to take a strong stand Canadian women were also becoming vociferous and demanding change in discriminatory legislation that affected women. As a result, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was set up in 1967 to investigate the position of Canadian women and to receive evidence from women all over Canada. Among this evidence, were several briefs from Indian women who had lost their status through marriage asking for changes in the Indian Act and particularly the sections concerning band membership (p. 79).

Turpel (1990) provides a good background in the emergence of Aboriginal women's groups:

The Indian Act dilemma gave rise to the formation of many other Indigenous women's organizations in Canada. Indian Rights for Indian Women (IRIW) was formed in the 1970s and has been active in lobbying and at other political efforts to eliminate discrimination from the Indian Act, IRIW at one time had regional representation. However, much of this has since joined with the NWAC (p. 98).

Other Native women's organizations came into existence in the 1970s: the Professional Women's Association and the Indian Homemaker's Association of British Columbia, and the Indian and Inuit Nurses Association. Turpel also informs us that Inuit women have now formed their own national organization, the Inuit Women's Association (IWA), which was incorporated in 1985. Each of these organizations has its own constituency. Turpel describes the evolution of a Native women's national organization:

The impetus for a national indigenous women's organization in Canada was generated at an International Conference held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1971. ...Extensive networking and organizing of women regionally and in communities, had already been underway in Canada since the late 1960s. In March of 1971, a Canadian indigenous women's conference was held in Edmonton, Alberta. Two other conferences followed in 1972 and 1973 (p. 95).

The result of networking culminated in the formation of a national indigenous women's organization, NWAC, in 1974, one which represented Indian, Inuit and Metis women. Ottawa became the headquarters for NWAC in 1980.

Turpel outlines the difference between mainstream feminism and the Aboriginal women's movement:

The NWAC, along with the Inuit Women's Association..., embodies an organized movement in Canada which differs fundamentally from the mainstream Canadian women's movement. The objectives of the NWAC and IWA are not feminist in nature, and they do not strive for complete "equality of men and women" in all areas. NWAC, at least, appears to accept genuine cultural role distinctions. IWA has not yet fully developed its organizational personality (p. 95).

Indian women who had lost their Indian status upon marriage to non-treaty persons challenged the Canadian government's legislation on women.

The oppression of Indian women analyzed by various feminist writers has considered the male domination including control of modes of production. The Indian Act as an instrument of colonization in the subjugation of Indian people has often been overlooked. Despite many revisions, the Indian Act continues to define and regulate the lives of Indian people in every respect. It is a special legislation exclusively for Canada's Aboriginals. Not only do Aboriginal people have to live within the confines of the Indian Act, they are also subject to provincial and federal laws. The process of colonialism is still very much alive in Canada.

How appropriate and applicable is feminist theory in the analysis of Indigenous women's oppression? The following pages examine scholarly works which have attempted to apply feminist frameworks in their analyses of Indigenous women's oppression.

3.2 History

3.2.1 The Contact Period

Etienne and Leacock (1980), Leacock (1981), Brown (1981), Van Kirk (1980), and Bourgeault (1989) all deal with the contact

period and fur trade era. Twelve case studies on the status of Indigenous women in the Pacific, Africa, and the Americas have been compiled by Etienne and Leacock (1980). The effects of colonization within a changing mode of production is thematic in these cases. Most of the research is ethno-historical, taken from European accounts and other historical data and reports; as well, some field work was conducted by anthropologists in some of these communities.

Within the Canadian context, Leacock's 1981 ethnographic research on the status of Montagnais-Naskapi women in Labrador seems to be in the forefront as a source of reference in the study of Indigenous women and is most often quoted by scholars. Leacock (1981) maintains that the Montagnais-Naskapi band was an egalitarian society wherein women were treated as equals by men in pre-colonial times. Women participated fully in economic, social and political decision-making processes in their everyday lives. According to Leacock, the subordination of the Montagnais-Naskapi women began with the Jesuits through christianization, which she terms "the Jesuit program for colonization". Leacock argues that the universality of male dominance is a myth and has used her research of the Montagnais-Naskapi society to prove her point. The influence of the Jesuits and the fur trade brought about change in their social organization and in marital relations and patterns of residence. Leacock believes that these changes in family forms should not be

ignored. Her suggestion is that Marxism has much to offer feminist theory in analyzing the changing relationships.

Leacock's findings are inconclusive regarding male and female relationships because these relationships fluctuated with changes in the modes of production, from traditional subsistence economy of a hunting-gathering collective to a more individualized one. Leacock's opinion is that the public and private spheres are more visible in the 1950s as waged labour entered the picture. However seasonal patterns in their subsistence economy show that there was a fluctuation in the modes of production.

Van Kirk (1980) and Brown (1981) analyze the relations between European men and Aboriginal women in Canada during the fur trade. The images of Indian women and their relationships with European men are based on the comments and observations of fur traders and missionaries found in letters, journals and wills, which Van Kirk researched in Canada and Great Britain. Brown's work is almost a sequel to Van Kirk's, but it deals more with the material aspects whereas Van Kirk focuses on the depth of the relationships in the marriages between Aboriginal women and European men.

Van Kirk's reconstruction of the past is written from a feminist perspective. She brings out various concepts such as male domination, victimization, classism, racism, women's autonomy, patriarchy and Victorian notions of womanhood. At times it would appear that her intention was to right a wrong, but at

the same time to vindicate the position of the Hudson's Bay and Northwester's officers. As well, Brown's analysis of the socialization of the officers in these companies and their treatment of their Aboriginal wives also appears to vindicate the officer's actions rather than to show contrasting Indian/White values. According to Van Kirk, the attitudes of missionaries and their wives towards fur trade unions were probably the most destructive as both condemned the morals of the fur trade officers and their Native wives. Van Kirk contends that there were indeed "many tender ties" in the marital unions and liaisons between European men and Aboriginal women. Perhaps what is most interesting to note with the arrival of European women was their racist attitude towards Native women.

Brown's work at times seems like a reenactment and a sequel to Van Kirk. The emphasis of Brown's analysis is on the negative impacts of Indian-White "country" marriages. Brown follows up on the legal implications for the Aboriginal wives and families of Company fur traders in the settlement of wills upon the death of the "husband" or his return to his country of origin.

Brown (1981) claims that all fur trade officers came to Indian country for one sole reason: to trade: "they arrived in the fur trade country with the intention of returning to their homelands, . . . [Not] to Christianize or to civilize the Indians . . . Rather they came as traders, to reside for [brief] periods" (p. xi). In support of this notion, Brown refers to the "turning off" process of Company officers (which is also described by Van

Kirk) in which the departing officers gave specific instructions as to how their Native wives were to be disposed.

Both Brown and Van Kirk acknowledge that Native women played a multi-faceted role in the history of the fur trade, but they do not discuss these roles at any length. Brown tends to focus on the legal aspects of these unions. She claims that despite long-lasting marital relationships between Company officers and Native women, Indian women and their offspring did not acquire the social status or respect of their husbands or fathers because these unions were not considered legitimate according to British law and Christian beliefs. Ordinarily, a European woman's position and status is conferred on her by her husband through marriage or by birth through their fathers; therefore, social status can be acquired or inherited. This was not the case for Indian women, however, because they were not "legally" married in the British way to the Company officers.

There are problems in these analyses. First, Brown does not take into account that wills and estates were unknown to Indigenous societies. To Van Kirk and Brown, the settlement of wills and estates may be important for security and as a value judgment for the measure of affection, but to Indian women unaccustomed to this practice, it may have been unimportant. In fact, even today, wills and estates are not commonplace in most Indigenous societies.

Van Kirk and Brown also tend to down-play the domestic roles of Indian women which were important for survival, both for

Indian and non-Indian. Brown especially focuses on the exploitation and bad treatment of Indian women by their European husbands. This, in turn, denigrates the importance and necessity of Aboriginal women's survival skills which were crucial in that period. The negative images of Indian women as whores, concubines, mistresses, and "cement" for trade, prevail. That these were "marriages of convenience" for both parties is not inconceivable or denied, as even in today's societies many European marriages are merely convenient and not necessarily unions of love. This oversight by Van Kirk and Brown has stigmatized Indian women but not European women.

What is lacking in both is that the values and traditions of Aboriginal people are not taken into account. True, there may not have been any written documentation by Indian people, but there are anthropological studies that could have been used, or records by missionaries such as those used by Leacock, oral history or even documentation from the mixed offspring themselves.

Feminist perceptions and Eurocentrism have shaped these authors' analyses. There is no indication as to how Aboriginal women perceived the notion of Wills and Estates. There must have been some sort of communication and records from the offspring of these mixed marriages, as there was a sort of schooling available for them at the trading posts. The notion of Wills and Estates and private property were not part of communal societies. Despite this oversight Brown (1981) states:

The title of this book [Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Families in Indian Country] derives from a British legal category that was sometimes invoked when the legitimacy of trader's heirs could not attain legal recognition as his relatives, they paid the same legacy duty as "strangers in blood" -- hence the need for law courts to assess their status (p. xxi).

Bourgeault (1989) is critical of the Eurocentricity in Van Kirk's and Brown's analyses and the fact that there is no general discussion of the domination of Europeans over the Indians. According to Bourgeault, it is also assumed that the Aboriginal women were introduced to a much better way of life. Bourgeault, in promoting Marxism, suggests that the analysis of oppression for Indian people and Indian women should go further: "It is reaching a time when we must go beyond the Indian Act and the illusion of rights defined under that Act. The Indian Act is, after all, race legislation developed to subjugate a free people" (p. 105):

The subjugation and oppression of Indian and Metis (Aboriginal) women in Canada has been a lengthy and complex process intricately involved with the development of capitalism. It has been a process which has involved the destruction of pre-capitalist Indian societies and modes of production, the development of class and race divisions, and the fashioning of an elaborate state system of segregation which has manifested these divisions (p. 87).

Bourgeault adds, "That the modern subordination of Aboriginal women to men (European and Indian) is not to be found in the original pre-capitalist societies. Rather, [it is] rooted in early French and English colonial praxis and inextricably bound with class and race divisions of capitalist development" (p. 87).

While Bourgeault may be correct in saying that we must go beyond the Indian Act, nevertheless, this legislation cannot be ignored as it still does dictate the lives of Aboriginal people and is the main colonial instrument for the Canadian governments. Furthermore, in his discussion of the "colonial domination of Indian women", Bourgeault does not identify the sections of the Indian Act which discriminated against Indian women, despite his reference to the "modern" subordination of Native women.

3.2.2 The Contemporary Period

Some scholars have documented the experiences of Canada's Aboriginal women following the contact period. These contemporary works are based on the perspectives of Canada's Aboriginal women. Their life experiences show that the roles of Indigenous women varied according to their culture, but that some roles have indeed changed and declined following contact with Europeans. It is apparent that the imposition of European-based laws and institutions over Indigenous peoples has contributed to these changes. Little theoretical orientation is evident in these works, and in some, feminist theory is more implicit than explicit.

The expressed desire of some of these writers was to have the voices of Canada's Aboriginal women heard. Poelzer and Poelzer (1986) have documented the experiences of Metis women in Northern Saskatchewan. The views of Metis women, their experiences and situations, are especially useful in understanding Aboriginal-White relations. Cruikshank (1990)

documents the life experiences and beliefs of three Yukon Native women, elders in their communities. Their experiences are more or less related to the gold-rush days. Despite changes in their lives, oral tradition, mythology, and oral history, as a part of Native societies and traditions, are evident in their recollections of the past. Writing the Circle (Perreault and Vance, 1990) is an anthology of western Canadian Native women's writings. It is a unique collection of poems and short stories, a form of resistance literature which covers a wide range of issues, and one which the writer views as a "grassroots" collection.

Finally, in Our Grandmothers' Lives As Told In Their Words (Ahenakew and Wolfart, 1992), seven Cree grandmothers from western Canada, five from Saskatchewan (Muskeg Lake, Sandy Lake, Meadow Lake, Green Lake, La Ronge), and two from the Metis communities along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border (Fishing Lake and Elizabeth colonies) relate their life experiences, beliefs and observations of change. One of the reasons they participated in the venture was because they felt that their granddaughters were becoming lost in the "White" world. The authors' objective was to document the Cree grandmothers' life stories and experiences as these tended to be largely ignored or unheard. The uniqueness of this book is that the stories are also in the vernacular; therefore, very little is lost in the translation. Middle-class Euro-Canadian feminists can learn much from these narratives and of the difficulty of trying to explain Aboriginal

women's oppression within the confines of feminist theory and the feminist standpoint.

3.2.3 Colonialism

The process of colonialism at the hands of Europeans has dispossessed Canada's First Nations of their rights as the original inhabitants of this country and has undermined their diverse cultures and customs. The dislocation and dispossession are well documented by Boldt and Long (1985), Manuel and Posluns (1974), Richardson, ed. (1990), York (1990), and Mercredi and Turpel (1994), as well as in various published articles by NWAC. The colonization of Canada's aboriginal people is grounded in the Indian Act. It is the colonial instrument for regulating and controlling the lives of Canada's Aboriginal people in every aspect. Gail Kellough's (1980) article describes the process of colonization in Canada:

The colonizing of a people is a social process; in the case of the Canadian Indians, this process had its roots in the earliest days of contact. While they enjoyed a high level of autonomy during the earlier period, a mutual interdependence also existed between the two groups. Ultimately, what distinguishes colonizers from colonized is a question of power. When the balance of power shifted in favor of the Europeans, the actual colonial period began (p. 343).

According to Kellough, analysis should involve the external and internal mechanisms of colonialism and their structures, as well as the experiences of the Native peoples. The external and internal factors are referred to by Kellough as the "two levels of power".

The external forces of colonialism set up this power structure in the form of institutions: the government and the church. The church then becomes part of the internal process through what Kellough terms "normative control". The state administers the people by various policies and programs and establishes control and power through legislation. The church and the missionaries act as agents of the state to establish normative control through psychological and cultural conditioning to prevent revolt. The state then has a political structure in place to exercise control and to pursue economic interests while the church converts the minds of the colonized. Kellough terms the state's role "structural colonialism" and "cultural colonialism" for the church's function.

Kellough also suggests a strategy for social change for the colonized through decolonization. Kellough says that Indian people must develop consciousness:

It is absolutely essential that Indian people know their history. They have become alienated, not from the white society, but from their own world. Assimilationist policies have only perpetuated and enlarged their problem. A sense of common experience and identity is a first step towards the ending of this alienation (p. 369).

Aboriginal women do have their own strategy for social change. Their source of wisdom and knowledge can be found in their grandmother's teachings which have been passed on for generations through oral tradition. It is suggested here that decolonization and co-existence can be achieved through the recovery of these sources.

3.2.4 Theories of Aboriginal Women's Oppression

Scholars have suggested several appropriate frameworks for analyzing Aboriginal women's oppression. Van Kirk believes that a feminist perspective is lacking in Native history. She suggests that somehow there should be a collaboration and integration of women's history and Native women's history to sensitize each other to ethnicity and feminism, respectively. Revision of sex roles is suggested as one approach (1987).

Van Kirk does not consider whether or not feminist sexual politics are appropriate for a revision of Native women's history and does not discuss what oppression means to Native women. As suggested before, the oppression of Native women must be seen within a broader context, not on simply sex specific terms. The whole process of colonization must be taken into consideration, and the Indian Act as Canada's main legal instrument of colonialism.

Emberley is critical of Van Kirk's articulation of feminism and Native studies (Emberley, 1993), and she questions Van Kirk's use of archival materials as being representative of Native women's experiences. Emberley proposes a feminism of decolonization based on Native women's writings which she suggests shows ideological differences and resistance. She believes this will provide a critique and point of departure for the deconstruction of relationships between Native women and Anglo-American feminism and post-colonialism. Emberley also maintains that Native women were powerful influences in their

Native societies and that the breakdown of egalitarian relationships was essential to colonization.

Emberley's proposed theory in the area of humanities has considerable merit with regard to the opposition between oral tradition and printed text, considering the struggle Aboriginal people have in validating the reliability and credibility of oral tradition and oral history as sources of knowledge.

Patricia Monture-Angus (1992) believes that feminism is one way of seeing things, but that it does have its limitations. She advises caution, because feminism can be a barrier to the type of social change Aboriginal women want: ". . . caution must be exercised before any complete embracing of feminist thought or feminist analysis occurs. The consequences of the feminist analytical structure contain serious barriers for the scope of social change that is defined as desirable from the Aboriginal perspective" (p. 253). Monture-Angus uses the concept of justice to articulate the differences between Aboriginal thought and Euro-based justice systems which she hopes to develop further. She utilizes feminist terminology but does not critique feminist theory in general. At the time of this writing, no definite position has been taken by Monture-Angus as to the appropriateness and applicability of feminist theory, but she does question the universality of experiences.

Winona Stevenson insists that feminists and Aboriginal women are involved in parallel but separate movements:

. . . I do not call myself a feminist. I believe in the power of Indigenous women and the power of all women. I

believe that while feminists and Indigenous women have a lot in common, they are in separate movements. Feminism defines sexual oppression as the Big Ugly. The Indigenous women's movement sees colonization and racial oppression as the Big Uglies. Issues of sexual oppression are seldom articulated separately because they are part of the Bigger Uglies. Sexual oppression was, and is, one part of the colonization of Indigenous peoples (Johnson, Stevenson, and Greschner, 1992, p. 159).

According to Stevenson, racism is more devastating than sexism. Her experience with feminists has not been positive, and she does not see conversion by either side as being necessary. In the final analysis, Stevenson does not endorse or reject feminism.

There are also scholars who have analyzed the relationship between the Aboriginal male-dominated organizations and NWAC including the impacts of the 1985 Amendment to the Indian Act, Bill C-31 (Krosenbrink-Gelissen, 1991). The exclusion of NWAC from constitutional talks during 1982-1987 forms the basis for her discussion. As well, the conflict between Aboriginal women's conceptions of motherhood and the broader feminist movement is discussed by Krosenbrink-Gelissen (1991). Both Green (1985) and Krosenbrink-Gelissen (1991) use sexual equality as their criterion for evaluating existing relationships between the male and female organizations and also within Indian governments.

The views of some Aboriginal women, taken from various articles and newsletters, have shown that there are differences in opinions, and while some seem to support feminism, others do not. Position papers and activities from The Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan (AWCS), the Saskatchewan Treaty Indian Women's Council (STIWC), and NWAC, have shown that there is some

conflict between Aboriginal women's groups over certain political issues.

The importance of acknowledging cultural differences arises in several writings. For example, Henrietta Moore's analysis of feminism and anthropology raises several problems with theorizing about the universality of women's experiences and positions, and about the "women's" perspective. She points out that recognizing cultural differences is extremely important in analyzing the status of women but it is still only "one form of difference".

Moore (1988) believes that a feminist anthropology could make some sort of contribution to contemporary feminism "...simply to point to the value of comparison and to the importance of acknowledging difference" (p. 198). The point of departure for a feminist anthropology would be in anthropology's past treatment of women and in its male bias. Moore does not deal specifically with Aboriginal women, but her suggestion that cultural differences cannot be ignored is important as a factor in analyzing the overall position and contributions of Aboriginal women.

According to Priscilla Buffalohead (1993), the contributions of women from different cultures have not been part of feminist scholarship:

Unfortunately, all too many feminist scholars wear the same ethnocentric blinders as their male counterparts, viewing the study of the history of tribal women valuable only insofar as it illuminates the origins of sexism in human society (p. 236).

Buffalohead shares the same concerns as Albers and Medicine (1983) regarding the portrayal of Aboriginal women in American movies and history as being either whores, drudges, or princesses, emphasizing their secondary roles in relation to Aboriginal men. The important economic, political and spiritual roles Aboriginal women played in their societies have often been overlooked in these portrayals. Buffalohead believes a culture clash may be responsible for this oversight:

Whether they realize it or not, feminist scholars dealing with the history of Euro-American women become caught up in issues of sex equality precisely because they belong to what has always been a class-stratified society characterized by unequal access to power, prestige, and privilege. Many tribal societies, on the other hand, stem from egalitarian cultural traditions. These traditions are concerned less with equality of the sexes and more with the dignity of individuals and with their inherent right - whether they be women, men or children - to make their own choices and decisions (p. 236).

Buffalohead outlines the various positions Ojibway women held in their societies as "farmers, warriors, traders" which at times crossed gender roles. Albers and Medicine (1983) also claim that the Plains Indian women played multi-faceted roles and although there was a division of labor, at times roles crossed over, depending on the circumstances and needs of their group. Albers and Medicine are of the opinion that colonialism and the changing relations in production have contributed to the changes in Indigenous male and female relationships.

Buffalohead also discusses the autonomy of Ojibway women with regard to their sexuality: "In the flow of family life, the ideal of mutual respect dominated the relationship between the

sexes" (p. 241). The women were indeed responsible for child-rearing until weaning, at which time men became more involved in child-rearing. Divorce was not uncommon and was less traumatic than present day divorces because children and property were not divided according to parental and property rights. Children were often looked after by an extended family, and therefore custody was not an issue. Also, the concept of private property was uncommon in Aboriginal societies at the time.

There is definitely a conflict between the relationship of the Aboriginal women's movement and the broader feminist movement with regard to the concept of "motherhood" and the role of women. As well, there are other situations that Aboriginal women do not share with feminists such as national oppression, of which, racism and classism are parts.

3.2.5 Indigenous Women's Concerns

Globally, Indigenous women appear to be more concerned with racism, classism and national oppression in its various forms than with the issue of sexism alone. Several articles to this effect can be found in publications by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in Copenhagen. One publication, Document 66 - Indigenous Women on the Move, (IWGIA, 1990), contains insightful information on the Indigenous Women's movements for liberation. Most of the contributors seemed more concerned with their home environments, land dispossession and displacement, loss of traditional economies and customs, the rights to self-determination and self-government, and other

societal problems affecting their communities as a whole, rather than solely with male domination.

Several of the women submitting articles indicated racism and national oppression were the greatest barriers to their "liberation", a term which implied self-determination for their people, and not simply liberation for themselves as women. This is somewhat different from the contemporary Euro-American feminist concept of liberation, a genderless society, which will supposedly bring equality and liberation for all women.

Persons working with Indigenous people globally and in international affairs have also prepared reports for the United Nations General Assembly. Julian Burger (1985), Sadruddin Aga Khan and Hasan bin Talal (1985), and Roger Moody (1988) have worked with and researched Indigenous peoples, and their reports contain useful background information. All believe that Indigenous people (collectively) share a respect for nature. As well, the dynamics in the social, economic, and political lives of various Indigenous societies by colonial forces for hegemonic and capitalistic purposes is well documented in these works. Their works bring together some commonalties and similarities that Indigenous peoples share, globally.

Within the Canadian context, Aboriginal women have organized collectively to challenge the discriminatory section of the Indian Act, under Indian Rights for Indian Women (IRIW). This challenge was aimed at the Canadian government's policy for discriminating against Indian women on the basis of sex, race and

marital status. It was not a challenge against the male dominance of Indian men because Indian women knew that Indian men did not legislate or take part in the formation of the Indian Act. It was Canada's Indian Act that provided the impetus for an Aboriginal women's movement.

Aboriginal women belonging to the national organization NWAC have become part of the national Aboriginal organizations in Canada to challenge Canada's colonial policy. Aboriginal women are aware of the divisiveness caused by the state's legislation on Indians, and have shared many common experiences with women from many First Nations as well as with some men. Unfortunately, NWAC has not been included as part of the Aboriginal delegation to national conferences held by the federal government, and this has caused conflict between the sexes. Consequently, the male Aboriginal organizations have come under attack for not including women from NWAC as delegates, and sexism became an issue with the former leading spokespersons for NWAC.

The 1985 amendment to the Indian Act, Bill C-31, which provided a process for the reinstatement of Indian persons who had previously lost their Indian status through voluntary or involuntary enfranchisement, has made this conflict worse, not improved it (Krosenbrink-Gelissen, 1991; Green, 1985; Purich, 1986). The adverse reaction of some Aboriginal leaders to the reinstatement of Aboriginal women has been well documented and has shown that divisiveness between the former registered members and the newly registered members of Indian Nations exists. The

issues arising from this amendment are complex. Sexism within Aboriginal communities became an issue. However, sexism is not the only concern that Aboriginal women have to worry about. As colonized persons, as women, and as Aboriginal persons, they face a multitude of problems. The impact of the state's legislation on Indians in Canada not only oppresses members of First Nations but causes divisiveness within these societies as well. Mary Two-Axe Early best summarizes the totality of the situation.

Mary Two-Axe Early (1992), an early founder and activist of IRIW, has presented an overview of how Aboriginal women organized to challenge federal legislation and the consequences of such a movement. She says that Aboriginal women had been aware that Canada's federal government treated Aboriginal women differently from Aboriginal men with respect to marriage laws, but they were powerless to change this law:

During the late fifties and sixties, women's long struggle for equality emerged here and abroad. In 1968, we Indian women felt that the climate was right, that our time had come. We Petitioned [sic] the newly appointed Royal Commission on the status of women claiming that Section 12-1-B of the Indian Act was sexist and discriminatory in that any Indian women [sic] who married a non-Indian suffered (p. 22).

Two-Axe Early describes how this group evolved into an IRIW national organization:

In 1969 thirty of us Quebec Mohawk women who has [sic] lost our status through marriage came together to fight the discrimination of Section 12-1-B of the Indian Act. We prepared a brief to the newly formed Royal Commission on the status of women. We chartered a bus and traveled to Ottawa to present it personally to commission members. . . . Our brief was well received and a recommendation to end the discrimination of the Indian Act appeared in the final report of the Royal Commission, just when the report was

published that recommendation was deleted. Later in the same year we founded the first Indian Women's Organization dedicated to repeal 12-1-B "Equal Rights for Indian Women" (p. 23).

Two-Axe Early notes that the name changed from "Equal Rights for Indian Women" to "Indian Rights for Indian Women" in 1973. It would appear that the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) had reneged on the inclusion of the recommendation presented by Indian women and that this action may have prompted Indian women to establish a separate Indian women's organization.

Two-Axe Early describes the mixed feelings she had, of hope and frustration, in the struggle to have Section 12-1-B repealed:

There were days of shame when some Indian leaders threatened to shoot us and to burn down our homes. Shame for our brothers and shame for our government and for our political leaders who remained silent. It was Canadian women who broke the silence raising their voices in protest condemning those threats of violence against us (p. 22).

However, as can be noted, it was Aboriginal women themselves who brought matters to a head and initiated the challenge to have the Canadian federal government's discriminatory laws repealed.

Unfortunately, the latest 1985 amendment to the Indian Act (Bill C-31), which repealed the previous discriminatory provisions, has not improved the unhappy lot of persons affected by the pre-1985 legislation. Two-Axe Early (1992) states:

...I was happy that women who had lost their status could at last go home. I was wrong, once again we were betrayed by the promise of politicians. The government gave us back our Indian Status with one hand, and with the other hand they gave the legal power to the Band Councils to choose those who could return. They did not choose women who had opposed them (p. 23).

It is clear that this struggle has not been shared by the predominately Aboriginal male leadership. The silence of Aboriginal male leaders in addressing Aboriginal women's concerns has led to the assumption that they have adopted European values and the patriarchal system. Their continued silence does nothing to disprove this assumption, and this is one reason why Aboriginal women in various organizations are concerned with the direction Aboriginal leadership has taken.

3.2.6 An Alternative Theory

Feminist theories and colonialism have not been adequate in the analyses of Indigenous women's oppression. An Indigenous perspective and model is significantly absent. Indigenous people do have their own world view. It is this Indigenous world view that I wish to develop as an alternative theory. George Manuel (1974), in The Fourth World: An Indian Reality, describes what it is like to be dominated and oppressed by the state and by a predominant immigrant Euro-Canadian population. The impact of colonialism has subjugated and undermined the cultural beliefs and governments of Canada's diverse First Nations, thus placing Aboriginal people in a "fourth world", separate from Euro-Canadian society. According to Manuel, "the Fourth World has always been here in North America. Since the beginning of European domination its branches, one by one, have been denied the light of day. ...our victory begins with the knowledge that we have survived" (p. 214). Manuel makes several references to the "fourth world" in his exhortation for Aboriginal home rule

and partnership in Canadian society. The concept of a "Fourth World" as a possible analytical framework is often overlooked or has not been fully developed.

The writer's interpretation of Manuel's references to the "fourth world" is that it is both a description of how colonized persons perceive their world within the confines of the more dominant Euro-Canadian structure and a strategy for liberation. To Manuel, liberation means the right of Canada's Aboriginal people to govern themselves. He views the "fourth world" as the right for Canada's Aboriginal people to co-exist, side by side, with Euro-Canadian society, with our own governments and institutions. It does not mean separation from Canada but simply the right to have a third order of government recognized and operating alongside federal and provincial governments. The writer wishes to develop this concept as a world view, as a political strategy, as a strategy for liberation, and as a form of self-government.

The Four Directions model has been developed from the philosophical view held by most Aboriginal peoples. There are, of course, some variations in interpretations because of the diversity of First Nations, but most follow the concept of the four directions:

The four directions, North, East, South and West, are represented respectively by the colours white, red, yellow and blue. Within these colours are the four races of Man: the Whiteman, the Red Man, the Yellow Race, and the Black Race; the four Life-givers: air, food, sun, and water; the four seasons: winter, spring, summer and fall; the four vices: greed, apathy, jealousy, and resentment; the four

moral principles: caring, vision, patience, and reasoning (Williams, 1989, p. 49).

Attached is a diagram of a circle marked Appendix A which shows the cyclical and harmonious conceptualization that Aboriginal people hold of the world. This circle has become known as a Medicine Wheel or the Circle of Life to most scholars.

The interconnectedness of all things and their dependence upon each other for survival is basic in Aboriginal world view understanding. The following is an interpretation of the Circle of Life by Alice Williams (1989) in her quilting designs:

Lines that radiate from the "Pimaatisiwn Wheel" tell us that each Being in the creation affects all that comes into contact with her/him. The centre, where all the colours touch, is the soul. The belief is that all Beings, all animate objects, have a Soul or Spirit. The Mother Earth circle represents the physical existence of all things. The lines radiating from the physical circle show that we have a physical effect on our surroundings, while lines from the centre, the Soul, show that our Souls also have just as great an effect on all things that touch our lives (Williams, p. 49).

Williams, a person of mixed heritage, designs quilts that reflect both sides of her ancestry. The circles in her quilting blocks have become symbolic of Williams' work and represent her Aboriginality as the central theme but are framed by non-Aboriginal themes. Through these quilts, Williams has been able to pass on Aboriginal philosophy.

The Circle of Life as represented by the Medicine Wheel forms the basic underlying philosophy Aboriginal people have of the world around them. Within this circle, there are four main directions, four elements, four races, four colors, four seasons and four main teachings (as seen in the organization structure of

NWAC). There may be slight variations, for example, as to colors, and each First Nations has their own interpretation and way of teaching. For example, the concept of the Circle of Life (Pimaatisiwin), "Pimaatisiwin is the aim and hope of living a good life on this Earth"(Williams, p. 49). Williams' explanation would not be complete if some parts were excluded. According to Williams the four directions is representative of many things:

The North gives us the rocks, which speak to us of strength. The East gives us the animals, which talk to us about sharing. From the South we get the trees, which teach us about honesty, and from the West we are given the grasses, which teach us about kindness. All things in this Life were, and are, given to us by the Mother of us all, Our Mother, the Earth. She is represented by the green (sometimes brown) circle, which encompasses the four Colours and all that we experience (p. 49).

Williams' interpretation of the Circle of Life is shared by many Aboriginal peoples as can be noted in the literature review. Another representation of the circle can be found in a poem by Elle-Han'sa called "The Circle of Life":

The Creator made the Earth round
 She made the Grass and the Trees
 the Birds, Fish and Animals
 to follow the purpose of Her Creation.
 and She made the four races of Mankind
 black, white, yellow, brown
 and placed them in the East, North, West and South
 She made the Sun, the Moon and the Stars
 and asked them to form circles
 so that we should understand
 the Wisdom and Meaning of Life.
 Because Life as the Creator meant it
 is a circle: from the Creator
 to the Creator, the Circle of Life
 (Elle-Han'sa, 1989, p. 53).

These are two examples of Indigenous philosophy currently being passed down through different means.

Other scholars have not been very precise in their interpretation of an Aboriginal's conceptualization of the "fourth world". They tend to be more interested in the term as an analytical approach, but they do not perceive the term as a strategy for liberation as does Manuel. Nelson Graburn (1981) examines the use of the term as applied by some scholars and the Indigenous people themselves. He believes this concept is appropriate to describe the conditions of Aboriginal peoples and their relationship with Euro-Canadian society (pp. 66-70). Beverley Gartrell (1986) also explores the interpretation and usage of the term within the process of Western European expansion. Gartrell's approach is more economic. Gartrell uses land and labour exploitation as her criteria for analysis, as well as in the degree of settlement and ideological domination by the colonizers. Gartrell does not appear to be in favour of the term "fourth world" because it tends to overlap with other forms of colonialism, and also because the term has been used broadly by scholars to describe the oppressed peoples, minorities, ghettoization, the sick, the elderly, and other oppressed groups in various circumstances. Graburn (1981), on the other hand, develops the usage of the term as one based in taxonomy:

Ever since the work of Durkheim and Mauss on Primitive Classification (1903) we have known that Four is the key number for American Indian peoples --a more balanced and holistic order than the hierarchical and dynamic reliance on three in the West and perhaps Japan. It is perhaps most appropriate that the major expression of the concept of 'four worlds' should have come from the Canadian Indian peoples. (p. 69).

Graburn's analysis regarding the number four: "the four directions" and "four races", is quite common in Aboriginal circles in describing order in the cycle of life and of the world. In fact, this concept forms the structure of NWAC, the Aboriginal women's national organization of Canada.

3.2.7 The Four Directions Model

NWAC was approached by what they believed to be a feminist organization, The Canadian Woman (Canadian Woman Studies, 1989), to prepare a volume on Aboriginal women. This issue contains information about the activism of Aboriginal women, within and without NWAC, and is truly representative of Aboriginal women's diversity. The structure of NWAC and the Circle of Life philosophy can also be found in this edition. All the different regions in Canada under NWAC as well as various Aboriginal womens' achievement organizations have contributed and therefore it provides a good account of Canada's Aboriginal women's activism.

NWAC's (1989) structure is based on the four directions and under each direction is a region of Canada responsible for addressing certain issues and concerns. Each of these regions has a portfolio for a certain period of time, which then rotates; thus each region shares the responsibilities of all portfolios. For example, at the time of writing, the East was responsible for Education and Culture, the South for the Family, the West for Justice and Rights, and the North for the Community, (NWAC, 1989 pp. 134-135). In each region these portfolios are subdivided,

some examples are curriculum development, language instruction, and Native history.

Sexism, sexual inequality, sexual abuse, violence and other forms of abuse have also been addressed by Aboriginal women under one of these portfolios. As mentioned previously, each region under NWAC has a portfolio and part of the Western region's portfolio was to address abuse in its various forms. This approach is holistic in nature so there tends to be an overlap of issues. In addition, NWAC (1989) also operates in the form of a "grandmother's lodge":

...our self-identification as an association is that of a "Grandmother's Lodge." In this "Grandmother's Lodge," we, as Aunties, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers and Relatives, collectively recognize, respect, promote, defend and enhance our Native ancestral laws. We acknowledge the Creator as one being --one who gave us our spiritual beliefs, language and traditions, and we fully acknowledge and empower ourselves by accepting our responsibilities as Aboriginal women (p. 133).

Aboriginal women belonging to NWAC acknowledge their responsibilities and roles as women and wish to retain these roles. They believe that their organization, which represents Aboriginal women, should be included in any decision-making process Aboriginal male leaders are involved in, as it was traditionally. It does not necessarily mean a separate feminist movement, but rather one that will complement the Aboriginal organizations which tend to be male-dominated. It should be noted, though, that leadership of the Aboriginal organizations is open to women as well as men, and that there are no restrictions as to who can run for office.

Sex-oriented issues are not the only concerns Aboriginal women have, as is evident in the following NWAC (1989) statement:

Our efforts concentrated on effecting amendments to the Indian Act, attaining guaranteed equality rights in the Canadian constitution, and increasing our participation in the movement towards re-establishment of Aboriginal governments (p. 135).

As a strategy for liberation, Aboriginal self-determination and self-government are also goals of the Aboriginal women's movement as it is with other Aboriginal organizations. However, the members under NWAC want to ensure that their rights as Aboriginal women will not be abrogated by federal legislation, as they were in the past, and that their rightful participation in negotiations will be upheld by future Aboriginal governments.

The effects on the Aboriginal people as a whole make up the agenda for an Aboriginal women's movement. It is not a struggle solely against male domination, but rather one of liberation from the colonial policies and national oppression of the more dominant Euro-Canadian immigrant society and their governments. NWAC is particularly concerned about the type of self-government that will be implemented by Aboriginal leaders. The present Indian bands and governing institutions have not followed traditional Indigenous forms of governing and have adopted European models of government.

4.0 METHODOLOGY, DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 The Structure of the Native Women's Association of Canada

Aboriginal women have become vocal in addressing the concerns and issues confronting Aboriginal people in urban centres, especially with issues affecting women and children. The collection of data includes activities of various Aboriginal women's groups at the national, provincial and local levels. Some Aboriginal women belong to more than one organization and therefore can be considered as representatives of several organizations.

The structure of the national and provincial Aboriginal women's organizations was important in determining the methodology for the collection of data, as were their goals and mandates:

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is founded on a collective goal to enhance, promote and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations and Metis women within Aboriginal and Canadian societies (NWAC, 1989, p. 133).

NWAC is an umbrella organization for any Aboriginal women's group who wishes to be part of this national organization. The Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan (AWCS) is a sister of this organization. In addition, there are also Aboriginal women's organizations from the other provinces who are associated with NWAC. However, not all Aboriginal women's organizations within the provinces come under the umbrella of NWAC but yet could still

be considered as being part of the overall Aboriginal women's movement.

The national organization, NWAC, and the provincial organization, AWCS, are the groups that deal mostly but not exclusively with the urban Native populations in Saskatchewan. These two groups form the core of the research population, although a few other Aboriginal women's groups within the urban centre of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, have been included.

Many Aboriginal people residing in the urban centres are "off reserve" Indians. "Off reserve" Indians include registered Indians who have migrated from their reserves for various reasons, as well as those who have been reinstated or newly registered under the 1985 amendment to the Indian Act, Bill C-31. The lack of housing on Indian reserves, inadequate financial resources, services and opportunities are usually factors which lead to the migration to the urban centres. Many also come in pursuit of employment, higher education and training, and medical care. Other segments of the Aboriginal population in urban centres include the Metis, Inuit, and non-status Indians. Within this urban setting Aboriginal women of many nations have come together collectively to address their concerns.

For the most part, Aboriginal women and children (as well as some Aboriginal males) in the urban centres experience a dual oppression, by their own Aboriginal band governments and by the non-Aboriginal governing institutions. This oppression occurs within health and welfare services and programs, education

funding, and voting privileges in First Nations' band affairs, as well as at the provincial and national levels. Therefore, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal affairs impact the lives of many Aboriginal peoples living in the urban centres. NWAC and AWCS address many of these concerns at the national and provincial levels respectively, collectively. These concerns and the structure of the organizations will be discussed nationally, provincially and locally (See Appendices B and C).

The structure of NWAC and its mandate provided a method for collecting data. Direction for NWAC comes from a "grandmother's lodge" and representatives from the four directions. Basically, it is the "grandmother's lodge" that was useful in determining what groups would best represent the wide spectrum of the Aboriginal women's governing structure. Geographically, the provinces and territories come out of the four directions, and each region is represented by a council member. The members within these regions may have more than one women's organization or local, all of which meet annually with NWAC. The annual meeting of area representatives gives speakers the opportunity to address certain issues. Figure 1 illustrates the structure of these regions:

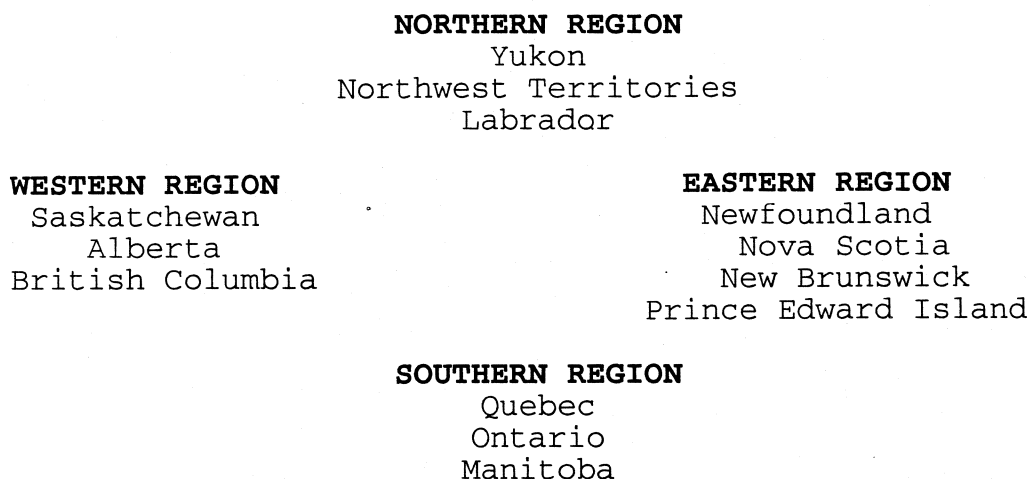


Figure 1 (Information from Canadian Woman Studies, 1989, p. 134)

Originally, the structure of NWAC was hierarchical, which gave power to those persons in office only. For fourteen years, it was modelled after Euro-Canadian non-governmental organizations. However, this was not in keeping with the Aboriginal concept of the universe, so NWAC decided to run its organization according to the four directions. The rationale for this model of organization is based on the philosophical beliefs held by most Aboriginal people:

As Native people, we have a unique concept of the universe - one which recognizes and respects the gifts and teachings of the Creator. Among the gifts of the Creator are the Four Directions, each with its own teachings. These teachings were given to Native people and have been in existence since time immemorial. Among the many different Nations of our people, interpretation of the teachings and symbols may vary, but the basics remain the same (NWAC, 1989, p. 134).

In this way, the governance of the organization involves all regions and gives specific responsibilities to each region. As well, this model allows fair representation of all the women's organizations under NWAC and in decision-making.

The following diagram, Figure 2, illustrates how these teachings are passed on. Each direction has a teaching, a symbol, and a colour. The teachings - trust, sharing, strength and kindness are four basic principles that guide or govern Aboriginal peoples:

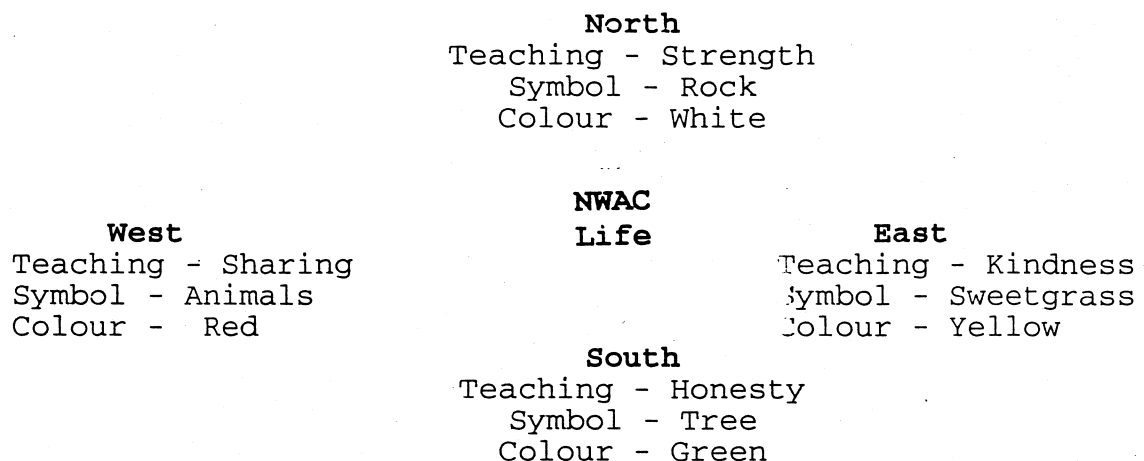


Figure 2 (Information from Canadian Woman Studies, 1989, p.134)

The women of NWAC are in the middle of this circular concept of the universe and represent "life". The interdependence and inter-relatedness of all things in the circle, to each other and to life, is a guiding principle in NWAC's organization.

The current governing structure of the national organization, NWAC, is that of a Four Directions council. The Board of Directors is composed of a national spokesperson, an executive leader from each of the four regions, a youth representative from each of these regions, three representatives from each region, with the exception of the eastern region which has been allowed a fourth representative, and an unspecified council of elders. The board of directors is quite similar to a

grandmother's council in that it involves all age groups and does not exclude male members. The mandate for the spokesperson for NWAC comes from the board of directors. NWAC (1989) has provided the rationale for this type of organizational structure:

At NWAC'S 14th Annual General Assembly, and following a comprehensive research and evaluation exercise, we adopted an organizational structure that is truly reflective of our way of life. We worked with our Elders and Traditional people, our members, our youth, and some of our men, to develop a Four Directions Council for NWAC (p. 134).

The structure of the provincial organization, AWCS, is similar to NWAC with a voluntary council of members. The broader provincial council consists of a provincial coordinator and ten area representatives. Locals are formed within these ten areas. For example, the Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatoon is in Area 6; however, there can be more than one local in each area. Each local also operates or conducts its business as a grandmother's council. Both the national and provincial organizations have a code of ethics, a mission statement, a vision statement, objectives, and by-laws. The code of ethics and by-laws will not be included because they tend to be rather lengthy and cannot be summarized as such, and are more administrative. The objectives of the national organization, NWAC, are as follows:

- to be the national voice for Native women;
- to address issues in a manner which reflects the changing needs of Native women in Canada;
- to assist and promote common goals towards self-determination and self-sufficiency for Native peoples in our role as mothers and leaders;
- to promote equal opportunities of Native women in programs and activities;

- to serve as a resource among our constituency and Native communities;
- to cultivate and teach the characteristics that are unique aspects of our cultural and historical traditions;
- to assist Native women's organizations, as well as community initiatives in the development of their local projects;
- to advance issues and concerns of Native women; and to link with other native organizations with common goals (AWCS, 1992, p. 21).

AWCS, the provincial organization, defines its objectives this way:

- a) to unite Aboriginal women to deal with the problems and issues facing Aboriginal women and children;
- b) to act as a forum from which Aboriginal women's issues and concerns can be raised collectively;
- c) to promote equal opportunities for Aboriginal women in programs and activities that meet their social, economic, political, spiritual and cultural needs;
- d) to promote a better understanding of Aboriginal women and offset discrimination and stereotyping of Aboriginal people through greater participation within all aspects of Canadian life;
- e) to foster mutual support among members to enhance cooperative growth and development of the individual and the community;
- f) to work with other organizations whose aims and objectives are similar to ours (AWCS, 1992).

The Vision Statement of AWCS reflects that of NWAC, and both are similar in that the Vision Statement upholds the concept of a grandmother's lodge:

WHEREAS, the collective vision of the Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan is a grandmother's lodge.
 WHEREAS, we are the Grandmothers, Aunties, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers, and Relatives who collectively recognize, respect, promote, defend, and enhance our Native ancestral laws.
 WHEREAS, we acknowledge the Creator as one.
 WHEREAS, from the beginning of Creation, the Creator gave us our spiritual beliefs, language and traditions, and placed us on Mother Earth which provides us with the essential needs for survival.

WHEREAS, we are governed by four universal principles; TRUST, SHARING, STRENGTH and KINDNESS, which nurture and enrich the organization.

WHEREAS, we pledge to recognize, respect and honour all our relatives' beliefs and customs.

WHEREAS, strength is the collectivity of voice.

THEREFORE, we the Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan fully acknowledge and empower itself by accepting the responsibility of our vision. These guiding principles will reflect the natural laws that will govern us to ensure the future home of our children
(AWCS Brochure, 1992).

The concept of the Four Directions model serves as the governing structure for NWAC, AWCS, and their locals. At the local level, the Saskatoon Local of the AWCS, a member of NWAC, is also that of a grandmother's lodge. Membership is fluid and fluctuates; however, there tends to be a core group of approximately four or more Aboriginal women that keep the local going on a volunteer basis. There is no regular meeting place or office for the Aboriginal women of the Saskatoon local due to lack of funds. As a result, keeping the organization active and alive is a problem, one which hinders the potential and activities of Aboriginal women in Saskatoon.

NWAC's development of the Four Directions council involved Aboriginal people from both sexes, as well as the youth, elders and traditionalists. NWAC's organizational model influenced the writer to seek informants from these categories.

4.2 Methodology

The researcher's primary sources are the Aboriginal women involved in various women's groups. Following NWAC'S four directions council, interviews included the youth, elders, women, and men. The writer originally intended to include Aboriginal male executives of Aboriginal organizations but they failed to respond to questions. Some notes taken during public speaking engagements of Aboriginal male representatives may partially fill this gap. The data were obtained mainly through taped interviews; however, in some cases, the informants preferred a written questionnaire either beforehand or as a form of response.

A total of twenty informants responded to my requests for interviews, although several more had been contacted. Even those informants consenting to taped interviews inquired about the sort of information I needed and asked if I could provide them with a set of questions for their perusal beforehand. In all cases, I allowed them some time to respond to the written questions. The research included various groups of Aboriginal women and was not confined to the national, provincial and local Aboriginal women's groups or representatives. Excluding Aboriginal women's groups simply because they were not part of a provincial or national women's network would not be representative of Aboriginal women's concerns in general.

The informants included two women from the national women's organization, NWAC (Ottawa); five women from the provincial women's organization, AWCS (Saskatchewan), and under NWAC; four

women from Wichitik Action Plan in Saskatoon; six persons (including one male) attending a women's studies course at Gabriel Dumont Institute in Prince Albert; one from the Older Native Women's Health Project in Saskatoon (who was also with AWCS), and three female youth attending Nutana Collegiate in Saskatoon. Amongst these informants were two Aboriginal female elders. The youth are not that active in the Saskatoon local of ACWS, so, in order for them to be represented, it was necessary to look outside the organization and into the high school community for Aboriginal youths.

Most interviews were carried out in the latter part of 1992 and the first half of 1993. Since that year, the Saskatoon Local of AWCS has not been very active because of a lack of funding. As of May, 1996, a group of approximately twenty Aboriginal women began reorganizing the Saskatoon Local. This is a volunteer organization and there is a great deal of interest in reorganizing the women's group but there are setbacks due to lack of funding and finding a meeting place that will be able to accommodate a group of this size. The writer was contacted and invited to attend this organizational meeting by one of the organizers.

The provincial office of AWCS, located in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, has also been involved in a change of leadership and gradual cutbacks in funding since my research period began in 1992. At present, their funding allows for only a half-time

coordinator and half-time secretary. There was no response from the provincial coordinator.

The data have not been broken down in relation to the ages or occupations of the informants, but rather according to both NWAC's and AWCS's structure and concept of a grandmother's council. A grandmother's council usually includes grandmothers, mothers, aunts, brothers, sisters, cousins, elders and youth.

Letters of request for interviews were also sent to the leading representatives of provincial and national Aboriginal organizations in January and June of 1993, after attempts at contacting them by telephone failed. One was to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), one to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), one to the Saskatchewan Treaty Indian Women's Council (STIWC), and two to the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). There was no response from any of these representatives. Unfortunately, interviews were sought during a time of turmoil for these Aboriginal organizations following the defeat of the 1992 Referendum. As well, these organizations were undergoing election proceedings. For this reason, I allowed some time to elapse before writing follow-up letters in 1995, but still there was no response, except from the newly-elected leadership of NWAC.

Locally, informants were sought in person and the response was favourable. In all cases, I introduced myself, my topic and discipline, and the purpose of my interview, which was to explore the status of Aboriginal women. Prior to the interviews, I

informed each of the participants that they could state their names, ages and positions or other pertinent information if they so desired but that I would simply refer to them as informants rather than by their names.

4.3 Aboriginal Women's Activism

The information from the literature review, the taped interviews, and written responses, showed that Aboriginal women do indeed have their own philosophy, their own political strategy and goal for liberation from multi-oppressive forces. What was most common amongst the various informants was the spiritual belief that all things in the universe should be in harmony. This belief was reflected in the Four Directions Model of governing and ceremonies which are based on the Circle of Life philosophy common to most Indigenous societies.

Generally, the three levels of the Aboriginal women's organizations, the national, provincial, and local, share a similar philosophy which is reflected in the provincial organization's (AWCS, 1995) Mission Statement:

To walk in balance, with guidance, by the creator, to unite our people together as healthy nations to ensure a better life for future generations (AWCS, p. 5).

Harmonious relations with each other and the world around us has been a guiding principle in Aboriginal societies since time immemorial. Aboriginal people have passed on their values and beliefs and traditions through oral tradition, oral history and at ceremonial gatherings, and through various artistic expressions. As illustrated and described by Williams in her

quilting, the Medicine Wheel or Circle of Life has become symbolic of the Aboriginal people's philosophy and view of the world. It is this philosophy that shapes the structure of some Aboriginal organizations.

According to a 1992 AWCS brochure, many issues prompted Aboriginal women to organize:

Today, Aboriginal women are in many different walks of life--we are working as community leaders, in the home, with Aboriginal organizations and in many other areas. However, far too many Aboriginal women face the frustrations of living in poverty. The need for education and employment is crucial--it is one of the many issues which must be addressed if Aboriginal women are to be full participants in society.

The need to address the issue of poverty was central to the organization of an Aboriginal women's group. Impoverished Aboriginal people in the urban centres suffer hardship and tend to be more visible in a non-Aboriginal setting. As well, the lack of a support system commonly found in an extended family does not exist in the urban centres. Therefore, an organization of this sort is much needed in the urban centre, not only for Aboriginal women, but for Aboriginal people as a whole. Poverty is only part of the problem:

Aboriginal women also face discrimination in different areas--we face sexism, racism, and are often discriminated against because we are single parents or on welfare. These and many other issues and concerns are the reasons why the Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan (formerly the Saskatchewan Native Women's Association) was formed in 1971 by a group of Treaty Indian, Metis and Non-Status Indian women (AWCS, 1992 Brochure)

Aboriginal women do not deny that there are sexual, physical and other forms of abuse in their communities; they have been

addressing these problems within their own communities. For example, the La Ronge Native Women's Council, a local under the umbrella of NWAC and AWCS, has been actively involved in this area:

The La Ronge Native Women's Council, has operated a safe shelter for battered women since 1985. They operated out of a three bedroom house which found many women being turned away due to the demand of service and lack of space. In March 1991, we moved to a facility which houses up to fourteen clients. Since opening the facility, we have had 222 women and 413 children come through our doors. The majority of the women decide to go back home for various reasons. Many have also come back to the shelter because things stay the same or get worse at home (Sanderson, 1992, p. 27).

One of the strategies this local tends to employ is to get men involved in a program which will make them more accountable for their actions. They do not believe that the justice system is useful because it only exacerbates the problem by making the men angrier, thus doing nothing to curb family violence.

At the provincial level, AWCS has also issued a report on family violence:

Family Violence is an issue that has and continues to demand of the AWC an enormous amount of time, effort and hard work. Family violence... is a societal problem and society must deal with it... In a study conducted by the Native women's Association of Canada on federally imprisoned Native women, the women prisoners reported victimizations throughout their lifetime. The violence they experienced was generally at the hands of men. They reported a correlation between child and female victimization and the crimes of violence they committed (AWCS, 1995, pp. 14-15).

The provincial body, AWCS, believes that change can only be accomplished by community involvement and that it cannot be achieved by women or men alone. They also firmly believe that a

return to cultural beliefs and values will heal Native communities:

In Native culture, "women are sacred, as lifegivers like the earth," it was reported to the Aboriginal Circle. The return to the past must include a revival of traditions and cultural practices which recognize the equally valued roles, rights and responsibilities of women. This was a common finding in studies under review. There needs to be a return to traditional ways, healing circles, and a regaining of power and sharing of power between the men and women. (AWCS, 1995, p. 15)

What AWCS, as the provincial body, suggests is that an Aboriginal component be included in the fight against family violence, cross-culturally:

The goal of zero tolerance for violence against women proposed by the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women must be implemented in a culturally sensitive manner. Zero tolerance must mean more than increased incarceration of our men. Instead, it must mean community and individual healing; the setting of community standards which respect the value [of] men and women equally; and enforcement in public and private places to end violence (AWCS, 1995, p. 15).

Collectively, these urban Aboriginal women's organizations are in agreement for the reinstatement of Aboriginal women's role in Aboriginal societies which they believe has been eroded by European values and attitudes and by Euro-Canadian governments. As well, most Aboriginal organizations and governing bands tend to be male-dominated and appear to have adopted the European patriarchal system as a form of organization and control. Therefore, as mothers and nurturers of their families, Aboriginal women feel it is their duty and responsibility to keep and reinforce former traditional roles of Aboriginal women:

In the past Aboriginal women were a part of the decision-making process and they must be in this role today. The

overall conditions of Aboriginal people cannot be changed by one group or by women or men alone -- it must be a joint effort with recognition and fulfillment of the rights of Aboriginal women and children (AWCS, 1992, Brochure).

It was found that Aboriginal women in Saskatoon have also formed groups which empower them to address their concerns more readily. Not all Aboriginal women belong to the aforementioned national, provincial or local Aboriginal women's organizations for various reasons. For example, a protocol between the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) with regard to funding has polarized Aboriginal women's groups rather than uniting them. As such, the Metis Women in Saskatoon have formed their own provincial organization and the former Saskatchewan Treaty Indian Women's Council (STIWC) now comes under one of the vice-chief's portfolio and under the umbrella of FSIN. This tends to separate Aboriginal women into various legal categories and has weakened and undermined the strength of the local, provincial and national organizations under the umbrella of NWAC. The following is an updated version of the Metis women's goals and objectives:

Established in 1992, the mandate of the Metis Women of Saskatchewan is to: ' promote development of programs and services which seek to address issues and rights of Metis women and which improves conditions which are unique to our circumstances and needs; and to support and act in solidarity with the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan in addressing issues, rights and needs which pertain to all of the membership of the Metis Nation.' (StarPhoenix, May 18, 1996, E6)).

The former Saskatchewan Treaty Indian Women's Council (STIWC) has not been active for some time but not due to lack of funding. According to a news article, the provincial government allocated

\$45,000 towards forming a new treaty Indian women's group under the direction of the FSIN (StarPhoenix October 27, 1994, C6).

It is apparent that these two Aboriginal women's organizations do not lack for resources. However, it is also important to note that both also come under the umbrella of the male-dominated, Aboriginal, provincial governing organizations. Despite the resources, STIWC has not as yet reorganized or become the voice of all treaty Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan. Therefore, no goals or objectives of STIWC are available at this time.

It was noted earlier that Aboriginal women in the urban centres tend to respond to specific issues and form their own interest groups according to needs. One example is that of the Wichitik counselling group, a local group of Aboriginal women in Saskatoon concerned with the apprehension of Aboriginal children by Social Services. Four women from this group were interviewed simultaneously and a fifth joined the group later on in the interview. This group has not been successful in obtaining funding but they continue on a volunteer basis.

According to these women, there was a need for such a support system for Aboriginal families and apprehended children because of the strained relationship between Social Services and the Aboriginal families. Wihcihitik's approach was to work with the families, with the aid of elders, to restore traditional Native values and beliefs as a means of helping individuals overcome the many problems encountered in such a situation.

At the time of research, the goals and objectives of this group had not been formally set because they had not incorporated as an organization. A recent update of the group's activities in August, 1996, confirmed that Wihcihitik was still in operation. It is still mainly a non-hierarchical volunteer service which consists of one contact person and several elders in the urban centre who continue the former group's activities.

Locally, it would appear that Aboriginal women in Saskatoon joined or formed groups according to immediate needs and concerns but quite often disbanded or became less active due to lack of funding. For example, The Older Women's Project focused on health and older women. However, this group was not initially organized by Aboriginal women but rather began under the Saskatoon Community Clinic in 1992 (Warden, StarPhoenix, September 9, 1995, C1). As of September, 1995, this group was in danger of disbanding because they could not obtain additional funding. Warden (1995) reports that a core group of approximately twenty-five Aboriginal grandmothers met regularly to discuss health problems and other issues (StarPhoenix, September 9, C1). According to this information, the women held health education sessions and healing circles as a means of improving their well-being.

Aboriginal women in Saskatoon tend to be involved in more than one group at one time. For example, some women from some of the previously-mentioned groups are also involved in a more recent upcoming Aboriginal organization for urban Indians, the

Urban First Nations Healing Initiative (UFNHI). This is not strictly a women's group but rather includes a mix of all categories of Aboriginal peoples in Saskatoon coming together as urban First Nations. In a sense, this organization is much like other Aboriginal women's organizations, the AWCS and NWAC, in that it is an umbrella group, in this case, for all urban Aboriginal people in the city.

One woman described the origins of this newly formed urban organization. Notes taken during a meeting (April 27, 1996) provide some background information. According to this informant, the vision came from Elijah Harper's Sacred Assembly in 1995. The understanding is that the Urban First Nations Healing Initiative is based on respect. It is a spiritual mandate that is rooted in the Creator's Laws which, as understood by most Aboriginal peoples, is respect for differences. The organization is not interested in the legal definitions of Aboriginal peoples as defined by the Canadian government. Rather it is committed to acknowledging the universal laws and teachings from the Creator which are based on respect for differences in religions, and of political affiliations such as the FSIN, MNS, the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) or any other legally defined Aboriginal group. In other words, this spiritual mandate recognizes and acknowledges the various political objectives of diverse Aboriginal organizations and spiritual beliefs of individuals. The goal is for all Aboriginal people to work together to achieve a healing lodge or place where urban

aboriginal people can go to receive spiritual help and other support from elders.

The representative for Area 6, the Saskatoon Aboriginal Women's Council, and interested members believe that a spiritual mandate of this sort is needed to revitalize the Saskatoon local of AWCS. At present, politics continue to divide Aboriginal women's groups. According to the representative, some "treaty" Indian women do not attend AWCS meetings because they believe it is a conflict of interest. However, it is not clear what this conflict of interest is because there are, in fact, some women of treaty status who continue to be active at the local, provincial and national levels of AWCS and NWAC.

The spiritual mandate is not a new concept in Aboriginal thought. However, political divisions amongst Aboriginal peoples does require a reaffirmation of values and beliefs so that Aboriginal peoples can come together in an urban setting, where they appear to be the most divided.

One other organization that deserves mention is that of the Meyoyawin Circle in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. It is a healing circle for women who are or have been in conflict with the law. As in the case of the Older Women's Project in Saskatoon, this project was not specifically initiated by Aboriginal women:

The Sexual Assault Program at the Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit recognized the need for a program for the incarcerated women at Pine Grove Correctional Centre, dealing with the [interrelationship] of sexual abuse and alcohol and drug abuse. . . . The Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit initiated an idea for a holistic program to be developed and piloted for the inmates and ex-inmates of Pine Grove Correctional Centre. . . . The Women's Healing Circle

is now called the Meyoyawin Circle. It is governed by a board of directors [comprised] of members from the community. There is a project Elder who is consulted for direction and advice (Meyoyawin Circle, Brochure).

Notes taken during a presentation by a project coordinator (March 3, 1994) give the same background information as their brochure. The healing circle is open to all women who are incarcerated in Pine Grove. However, since Aboriginal women appear to be a majority in this jail, the program has reflected an Aboriginal focus. It was estimated that approximately "95 - 96%" (Notes, March 3, 1994) of the inmates in Pinegrove were Aboriginal women:

The Holistic Self-Care Program is developed for the women at Pine Grove Correctional Centre, for the post-release program and for women who are in conflict with the law. The program is offered to all the incarcerated women, but as the majority of the women are aboriginal, the program is structured with a native focus and has an Elder for guidance and participation. At the beginning of each session, we form a circle, smudge with sweetgrass or sage, and have an opening prayer. . . . Sexual Abuse Education & Awareness gives basic information on sexual abuse, incest and its after-effects. There are preventative measures and supportive responses for the safety of children against sexual abuse, valuable information for the mothers who will be returning to their children upon release (Meyoyawin Circle, Brochure).

It was also learned at a meeting (April 27, 1996) that there is now also a program in place that provides for the transportation of children to visit their mothers in Pine Grove.

Three things should be noted in the Aboriginal women's movement. The first is that the concept of the circle, whether it is a medicine wheel, the circle of life, or a healing circle, is common in Aboriginal thought. It is the underlying philosophy of most Aboriginal women's organizations. Secondly, Aboriginal women tend to reify their roles as women and do not seek a

separatist feminist role. They do not oppose women's roles as do many feminists. And finally, Aboriginal women do not struggle for themselves alone but include their children and elderly as part of their struggle. Their concern is for the well-being of their families and Aboriginal people in general. It is a departure from feminism in the sense that feminists perceive the family and household as sources of their oppression and do not appear to appreciate their role as women, mothers and nurturers for future generations.

5.0 SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

The researcher believes that the goals and objectives of the research project were reached. The collection of data was qualitative rather than quantitative, especially the taped portions. Aboriginal people are a people of many nations, and women from many First Nations were represented. There were Cree, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, Dakota Sioux, Miqmaq, Metis, Non-status and a few had mixed Aboriginal and European backgrounds. This diversity of First Nations was important to the researcher in determining whether or not Aboriginal people shared a common world view.

A common theme that is apparent in the interviews and in the literature review is the acknowledgment of the Creator's role. Spirituality continues to be the foundation of Indigenous societies and is intricately interwoven in the Circle of Life philosophy. (see Primary Sources: Appendix D)

I will summarize five points relevant to my thesis project. A common world view has developed despite the diversity of First Nations and their activism. Aboriginal women are concerned with several issues which affect their daily lives and not solely with sexism and male dominance. Aboriginal women have undergone many changes in their lives due to colonial policies under the Indian Act and many Aboriginal people now live in urban centres. There does not appear to be a relationship between the Aboriginal women's movement and the broader feminist movement. (See responses to Questions #4 and #11) The theory that has evolved is

a distinct Aboriginal theory that offers an explanation for most Aboriginal women's views of human nature, their political strategy and plan for liberation.

What follows will enlarge upon these five points in greater detail. Firstly, Aboriginal peoples in Canada are diverse and come from many nations, but many are divided into distinct legal categories imposed by Canada's federal government. However, this categorization of Aboriginal peoples does not appear to have affected the common philosophy that most Aboriginal people share of the world around them. Almost all of the respondents felt that we were part of nature and vice versa. (See Question #5 in Appendix D)

The Circle of Life as represented by the Medicine Wheel forms the basic underlying philosophy Aboriginal people have of the world around them. Within the circle, there are four main directions, four elements, four races, four colours, four seasons and four main teachings. An illustration of the Circle of Life has already been provided and explained by Williams (1989, p. 49).

Williams' interpretation of the Circle of Life is shared by many Aboriginal peoples, as can be noted in the literature review and in the interviews. The most common theme and teaching is a respect for nature which means the universe and all things in nature are connected and dependent upon each other. Everything in the universe was put here for a reason by the Creator and Mother Earth has to be taken care of to ensure the survival of

future generations and the world. In the many conversations that I have had with Aboriginal women, this idea has often been referred to as "connectedness". Therefore, it is no surprise that Aboriginal women think in these terms about their relationships with men. Aboriginal women believe that they were put on Earth for a purpose. That purpose is to give life, but they cannot act alone.

Secondly, Aboriginal women are concerned with many issues that affect Aboriginal people as a whole, and, in particular, the future and well-being of their children. This became quite evident in the interviews and in the literature review. Several of the responses to the questions in Appendix D showed this concern for their family and Aboriginal persons in general. Many concerns and issues face Aboriginal women but especially more so in the urban centres, mainly due to their Aboriginality. Many of these concerns and issues included everyday problems. A few examples include racism, poverty, housing, health and welfare, lack of education and skills for meaningful employment, unemployment, transportation problems, alcoholism and its related consequences, increasing youth prostitution, and suicides. Questions #8 and #9 in Appendix D brought out numerous various responses. Most Aboriginal women believe that problems in the urban centres are exacerbated because of differences in cultures, loss of traditional Indigenous values and spirituality, and lack of a support system for Aboriginal people in the city. As is apparent from the overall responses in Appendix D, the informants

interviewed did not focus solely on male domination as the root of their oppression.

As well, many urban Indians feel alienated from both the non-Aboriginal government and their own Indian band governments. (Note responses to question 8 and also throughout interviews in Appendix D). They feel that they are not being adequately represented at meetings concerning Aboriginal affairs, and they feel powerless at the band, urban, provincial and national levels. This alienation was expressed by most of the informants, whether or not they had ties to their own home bands. This powerlessness possibly explains why there is a proliferation of Aboriginal groups within the urban centres. Based on the information obtained from Aboriginal informants, it would appear that many Aboriginal organizations have started as interest groups in order to address specific needs and concerns. Aboriginality does indeed affect the lives of Aboriginal people in urban centres, but it is also Aboriginality that unites urban Indians in addressing local everyday problems.

It is evident from the literature review and the interviews that Aboriginal women are involved in many different areas. As mentioned previously, under the structure of NWAC, certain portfolios (responsibilities) are given at annual meetings to the various locals of provincial organizations. Specific geographic area locals come under one of the four directions. For example, one of the portfolios for the western region is to address family violence in its many forms. These portfolios rotate, and, after

a period of approximately four years, a portfolio will be turned over to another region, and in turn, the western region will take over another. In this way, it is believed that all regions will have participated in every aspect.

Therefore, it cannot be said that Aboriginal women deny the existence of abuse in its many forms. As can be noted, there have been several articles on child and sexual abuse and family violence that have been submitted by area locals. Nonetheless, there are also many pressing issues that concern the immediate lives of urban Indians. As a result, many Aboriginal women in urban centres belong to more than one organization, some being non-Aboriginal. However, many Aboriginal women in urban centres do believe that the everyday problems facing Aboriginal people can best be shared and addressed through collective action and healing circles.

Thirdly, Canada's federal law on Indians, the Indian Act, greatly affects the lives of Canada's First Nations. Subsequently, any change to this legislation also has its impacts. Some policies have been discriminatory and have directly affected only Aboriginal women. Unfortunately, the subsequent families of these women have had to face the consequences of such policies. These discriminatory sections regarding marriage laws and loss of status have been documented in the literature review. One of the consequences has been displacement whereby many Aboriginal women and their families have had to relocate to urban centres because the pre-1985

legislation did not allow them to continue residency on their home reserves. Despite recent changes to the Indian Act, many of the formerly enfranchised Indians continue to reside in urban centres because of inadequate land bases and resources. As well, many members from Indian reserves have also migrated to the urban centres because of lack of resources, inadequate housing, lack of educational opportunities, health services, and job opportunities.

When the discriminatory legislation was amended in 1985, some newly registered members under Bill C-31 found that they did not have a land base to return to. As well, not all Indian bands welcomed their new members and often cited inadequate resources such as land, money and housing as reasons for their actions and attitudes. Many of these issues have been brought out in the interviews and literature review. Most of the respondents made some reference to the Indian Act and the impacts it has had on Aboriginal people. Most expressed dissatisfaction with the most recent 1985 amendment.

Many Aboriginal women have had to face change and adapt to new situations because of federal legislation, but many registered band members also migrate to urban centres for a better quality of life. As a result, they have had to adapt to urban life and many are caught between two worlds, the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Ironically, it is also within the urban centre that Aboriginal women are most involved in the preservation of cultures, languages, traditions, beliefs, and

values. It is also in the urban centre where Aboriginal women become most vocal. Most of the respondents were actively involved in some sort of activism within the urban centres; examples include the preservation of culture, activism in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, and education. Many of the women interviewed were also in the work force. Those who did not work outside the home were active as elders and usually attended workshops at various meetings.

Fourthly, it has become apparent from the literature review and the data from Aboriginal informants that there is a conflict of views between Aboriginal women and feminism. Mainly it is in the way that Aboriginal women perceive their roles as women. Answers varied from "minor to the nucleus of the community "as to the role of Aboriginal women in the communities. However, most of the informants believe that Aboriginal women still hold traditional women's roles regardless of their residency. However, some did say that Aboriginal women over 40 tended to be more traditional than those under 40 years and that many more Aboriginal women were now in the workforce.

Throughout the research it became apparent that most Aboriginal women want to preserve their roles as women, as childbearers, mothers, nurturers and caregivers as opposed to the feminists' discontent with these roles. Responses to Question #5 (Appendix D) confirm this position. It was also learned from the interviews and the literature review that most Aboriginal women see their role as their responsibility while feminists perceive

it as an oppression. Aboriginal women believe that their role as women is natural and that all things were put on earth by the Creator for a purpose and that all things in nature are equal despite differences in roles. In fact, difference is most essential in Indigenous philosophy in order for all species to be accommodated in the Circle of Life. Most feminists do not perceive their role as women to be a natural phenomena or equal but rather as a social construction.

Aboriginal women do not deny or degrade their own sexuality and perceive themselves as givers of life, necessary for the continuation of future generations. Feminist theories tend to degrade women's roles in society, especially reproductive roles, and to deny their importance as women, necessary for the reproduction of life. There appears to be more spirituality in Aboriginal women's views with regard to womanhood, one which seems to elude feminists. As well, the division of labour based on sex particularly upsets feminists but is accepted by Aboriginal women. All in all, feminists have formed a host of theories to explain the oppression of women while Aboriginal women firmly believe in the Circle of Life philosophy to explain their world view and their roles and responsibilities as women. However, both Aboriginal women and feminists do feel oppressed (or victimized) and have become political entities and are involved in parallel yet separate movements. As can be noted from the literature review and primary sources (Appendix D), their respective goals are quite different from one another.

Various feminist theories have emerged in academia and most use a method of deconstruction to juxtapose women's and men's roles to show how society has constructed sex roles and undermined the position of women. Male dominance is believed to be the root of women's oppression. Feminists tear down the cornerstones of society as an explanation for male domination and as a point of departure for the development of feminist theories. Aboriginal women rely on oral tradition and oral history to reinforce their roles as women. They use traditional roles in Indigenous societies as their cornerstones for the preservation of cultural roles. Through story telling and sharing at healing, talking or sharing circles, many traditional Indigenous values, beliefs and traditions are constantly being revived and regenerated.

Aboriginal women explain the subordination of Aboriginal women's roles in terms of European intervention during the contact period and colonial policy, namely the Indian Act. Research showed that Aboriginal women, whether or not they are involved in the national Aboriginal women's organization, firmly believe and use the Circle of Life philosophy to explain their beliefs and values. It is also this concept that they use for the healing of Indigenous communities. Time and again, one can hear this philosophy being repeated in many Indian circles. Aboriginal people are constantly being reminded and taught about Indigenous beliefs, values and traditions during ceremonies and at such gatherings as wakes, funerals, feasts, weddings, pow-wows

and at public meetings. The Circle of Life philosophy is being maintained through oral tradition, as it has been for centuries.

Motherhood is an important concept in Aboriginal thought and is inherent in the Circle of Life philosophy. It is the women's qualities that form the foundation of this belief. A woman gives and supports life through nurturing. She is important for the continuance of future generations. By the same token, Mother Earth is seen as a woman who gives and supports life to mankind. Mother Earth is a nurturer but it must also be nurtured in return to ensure future generations and survival. A woman's role as childbearer, nurturer and custodian is perceived as central to survival, hence the custodial nature of Indigenous philosophy.

When the respondents were asked what feminism meant to them, the answers varied. Some associated feminism with feminists seeking equal rights as men, or lesbianism, while many believed that feminists had a "thing against men". The underlying theme was perhaps expressed by one elder who perceived feminists as "men bashers". It does not seem possible that there will ever be a relationship between Aboriginal women's thought and the feminist movement because most feminist theories perceive motherhood and its responsibilities as detrimental, which places them in the private sphere. In fact, feminism does not support gender specific roles. It would appear that Aboriginal women and feminists will not converge to any great degree because of differences in culture. The four main schools of thought in contemporary feminist theory may intersect with Aboriginal

women's concerns, up to a point. For example, the principles of liberal feminism could be applied. However, this abstract individualism becomes inappropriate and inapplicable because not all Aboriginal women can attain self-fulfillment due to their circumstances. As well, their politics and conceptions of human nature would not coincide with other feminist theories. Some of the responses to Question #4 in Appendix D show ambiguity, while others are definitely opposed. As well, issues such as racism, national oppression, and colonialism do not affect most Euro-American feminists; therefore, Aboriginal women must act alone. This is a reality that has become obvious in the interviews and in the literature review. Most of the respondents felt that Euro-American feminists could not appropriately represent their concerns or act on them. Many believed that it was necessary for Aboriginal women to have their own organizations so that they could act on these issues.

And finally, the theory that has evolved from the research is that of a "Fourth World" perspective. This is not separate from the Circle of Life philosophy but is part of this belief system. In Aboriginal thought, the four directions are the guiding posts or cornerstones within the Circle of Life. It is in accordance with these four directions that many beliefs, values and responsibilities are taught. As was illustrated earlier in the literature review, each direction contains a symbol and teaching.

George Manuel (1974) also introduced this concept as a way of explaining the oppressive situation of Canada's Aboriginal inhabitants. The writer's interpretation of Manuel was that he used the "fourth world" to explain and describe this oppression and also applied this concept as a strategy for liberation but did not develop the theory to any great extent. It could be said that Aboriginal people are in a "fourth world" because they are an oppressed people. The Canadian government has chosen to treat Aboriginal people differently from the rest of the immigrant Euro-Canadian, settler society. As such, special legislation for Indians places them in a separate world: the Indian Act. It is Canada's most oppressive and effective colonial instrument. It not only dictates where and how Aboriginal people should live, this legislation also determines who can be an Indian.

As a result, the First Nations of Canada have become segregated, mainly on Indian reserves, separate from the rest of Euro-Canadian society. Early 1800 legislation has also forced many Aboriginals into mainstream society. The Euro-Canadian immigrant, settler society has now become the more dominant society in terms of population, ideology, culture and government. All decisions as to Aboriginal affairs are made by the federal government and more recently with provincial premiers as well. Canadian Aboriginal people have no decision-making power in their own or non-Aboriginal affairs at the national or provincial levels. There is only delegated power in the form of a chief and council at the Indian band level.

This plight is what Manuel brought out in the book and the fact that Aboriginal people do live in a "fourth world", under oppression and separate from Euro-Canadian society. However, at the same time Manuel extends the concept of the "fourth world" as being a part of the four directions teachings from an Aboriginal perspective as a possible strategy that would free Aboriginals from colonialism. Within the four directions are the four races of man. He believed that Aboriginal people and Euro-Canadian society could live together, co-exist, and live side by side in harmony, each with our own institutions. He envisioned Indian people governing themselves again. Like most Aboriginal people, self-government was a form of liberation for Manuel.

Throughout this thesis, this theory has developed even more, in the literature review and especially in the interviews. In fact, the Aboriginal women's movement, namely NWAC, has put this theory in place and in action. It is not mere rhetoric. The Four Directions model applied by NWAC is a form of Aboriginal self-government which is inherent in the philosophy many Aboriginal people share. The Circle of Life previously interpreted offers a distinct Indigenous world view, a holistic way of perceiving and understanding the world around us, as well as a way of governing. It is by no means a new approach but rather one that has been revived by Aboriginal women. Enforcing this type of government also has the potential to unite and heal dissident Aboriginal groups. This model would allow for more undelimited participation at the band, provincial and national

levels. Co-existence is a central theme in this model and one which is inherent in Indigenous philosophical thinking.

There are reasons for promoting this Indigenous model and suggesting that Aboriginal self-government adopts this form. At present, the chief and council system gives power only to a few. This form of leadership has been questioned by many Aboriginals, but it is Aboriginal women who have taken it to task. Election by majority is not a democratic process because it creates opposition and factions within Indigenous communities. The chief and councillors claim they are overworked and cannot possibly meet their peoples' demands. In turn, band members are often not satisfied by many decisions made by the chief and council and are powerless to change unsatisfactory decisions and situations.

At present, many registered urban Indians are also on the periphery and are being denied full rights because of their residency. Most Indian band leaders claim their priority is with their on-reserve residents. As a result, the treatment for urban Indians and on-reserve Indians differs. In this way, factions have been created. At the same time, the present election systems allows many chiefs and councillors to regain their positions term after term because they have the power to appease those that are eligible to vote. Most urban Indians do not need to be appeased because they are not eligible to vote at band elections anyway nor can they run for leadership positions.

There is a need for insight, the Aboriginal leadership should treat its membership with equality regardless of

residency. It is apparent from most of the interviews that there is concern about the divisive policies in force for urban and on-reserve First Nations band members and the direction Aboriginal leadership has taken. The Aboriginal leadership should search for a way of government that will allow for more community participation and decision-making. There is need for more accountability and all members of First Nations should have the same rights whether or not they reside on the reserve.

It would appear that there are some exceptions though as one of the respondents informed me in Question #2. Her reserve in Eastern Canada is under custom law. This means that there is no distinction between on-reserve residents and off-reserve residents and there are no set rules as to who can run for office or who is eligible to vote.

What is being suggested here is that Aboriginal leaders should look and listen to what Aboriginal women in Canada have to offer. The structure of NWAC is based on the Four Directions and receives its instructions from its area board members and a "grandmother's lodge" which includes members of the youth, the elders, and active members from both sexes. It is suggested here that within Indian band governments, a similar type of governing structure would be perhaps more effective and more in keeping with Aboriginal tradition. There should be a council of men, a council of women, a council of elders and a council of youth involved in decision-making. A speaker or speakers can be selected by these groups to speak on their behalf whenever a need

for representation arose. In this way, the power is not only in the hands of a few at the top and there would also be more accountability and more community involvement. At the same time, it would relieve the burdens of chiefs and councils who claim that their portfolios are difficult to carry out.

NWAC has already demonstrated that this type of governing can be implemented at the national level as well as at the local levels. In addition, to the structure of the governing body, NWAC has subcommittees to look after administrative duties and other areas of expertise. It is a workable type of government that is presently in place.

6.0 CONCLUSION

How do Aboriginal women perceive their oppression? It is apparent from the interviews and the literature review that Aboriginal women do not perceive their oppression in terms of male domination alone. They are oppressed by many other factors. It is Canada's colonial policy that most of the respondents blame for their oppression. Do they feel more oppressed in their own societies or in non-Aboriginal communities or a combination of both? The data from the interviews and literature review shows that most Aboriginal women feel more oppressed in the urban centres because of their Aboriginality. There is a feeling of alienation in the urban centres that is not felt on their home reserves.

With regard to the male-dominated organizations, many of the respondents were quick to state that not all men were to blame. In fact, few expressed discontent with males being more prominent in Aboriginal organizations, but many did express their concerns about the direction both male and female Aboriginal organizations were taking. Most of the respondents expressed the desire for a return of former Aboriginal self-governing institutions. (see data in Appendix D). They firmly oppose the European hierarchical form of governing which Indian leaders have adopted.

The alternative theory, the Indigenous Circle of Life philosophy, that has been suggested is more appropriate and applicable in the analysis of Aboriginal women's multiple oppression. Inherent in this ideology is the concept of the four

directions which has the potential for expansion in many different aspects. It can be applied as a model for self-government as NWAC has done but it also serves as an explanation and a teaching as to why harmony is important in life and in relationships. Also embodied in this concept are the four races of mankind and co-existence. Manuel (1974) foresaw co-existence as a strategy for liberation, however, he also used the concept to describe and explain the oppressive situations of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. Broadly speaking then, the four directions model contained in the Circle of Life philosophy embodies many explanations as to how Indigenous people perceive the world around them. Overall, the Indigenous Circle of Life philosophy contains the "Fourth World" perspective which can be expanded in many aspects. In terms of developing an alternative theory for Indigenous women's oppression, the following is applicable. It offers an Indigenous perspective, an explanation and conceptualization of human nature, a political strategy, and a strategy for liberation and social change. It is more appropriate and applicable in analyzing Indigenous women's multiple oppression but it can also be expanded to include the multiple oppression of all Indigenous people.

At the present time, various feminist theories and their preoccupation with male domination have not been adequate in explaining Aboriginal women's situations. A distinct Aboriginal perspective is lacking in feminist theory. There are many oppressions that Aboriginal women face daily because of their

Aboriginality, socio-economic status, and gender, especially within the urban centres. Most academic feminists do not face the same oppressions in their everyday lives. As a result, their perceptions differ.

The "Fourth World" concept inherent in the Indigenous Circle of Life philosophy is useful in many ways. First of all, it is an Indigenous world view which informs others of how beliefs and values are formed. Harmony rather than dominance is inherent in the Circle of Life philosophy. Hierarchy does not rule. Therefore, this ideology explains why Aboriginal women believe that both sexes are equally important and why they want to maintain Indigenous values, beliefs and traditions.

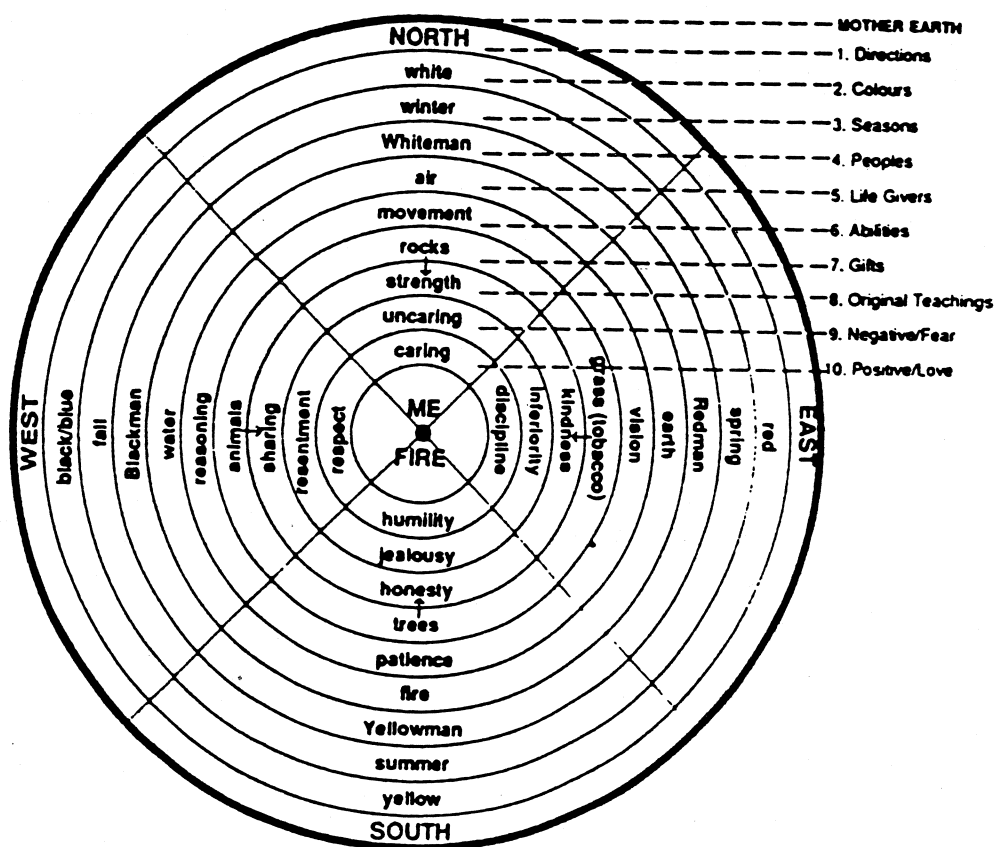
Secondly, the model of the Four Directions form of government has its roots in the "fourth world" concept. NWAC has used this concept as a way of governing. It not only provides a structure but offers a process for the actual implementation of a traditional form of Aboriginal self-government.

Thirdly, it is a form of liberation for Aboriginal people. With this model, Aboriginal leaders can define and explain what Aboriginal self-government is. The inability of the predominantly Aboriginal male leadership to define Aboriginal self-government has stalled acceptance of self-government by the more dominant Euro-Canadian society and politicians. Traditional types of governing have not been in place in Indigenous communities, therefore, NWAC's structure and governing can serve as a working model.

It is Aboriginal women in Canada who have taken the lead in restoring Indian tradition. They have formed an Aboriginal form of self-government called the Four Directions model, a concept which is inherent in the Circle of Life philosophy. They are able to define this type of government and how it can operate. They have revived a form of Indian self-government. This may not be a panacea for Aboriginal peoples' oppression but it is a start in the healing of Indigenous communities. Social change becomes a possibility as more people become aware of a working type of Aboriginal self-government. With awareness comes the knowledge that Aboriginal self-government is not to be feared. This can only result in acceptance. Indeed, the Four Directions model of government has many potentials. Thanks to the efforts of Aboriginal women in Canada who have made this possible, they are keepers of the culture.

APPENDIX A

The Circle of Life (Canadian Woman Studies: 1989:2)

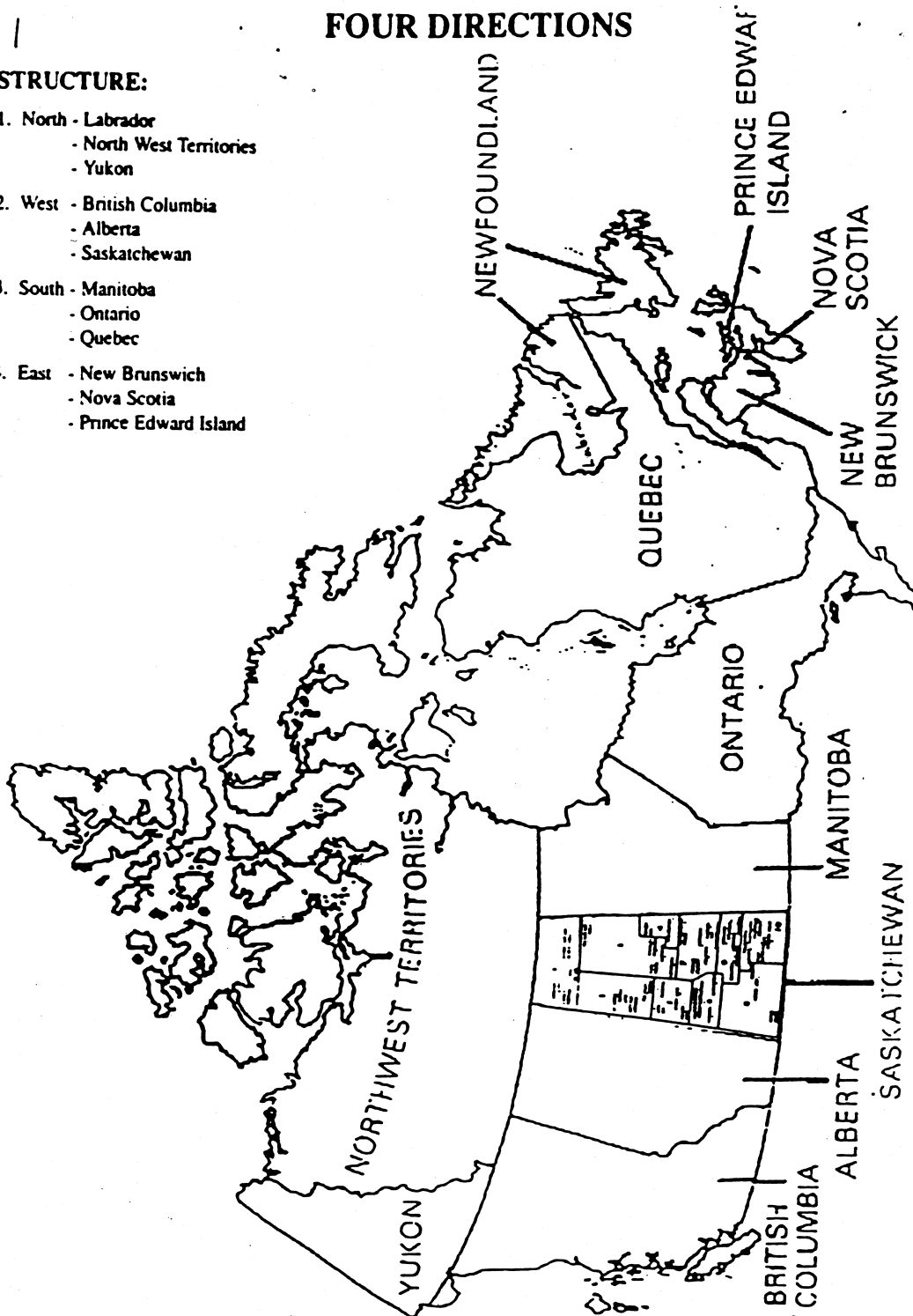
The Pimaatisiwin Circle

APPENDIX B

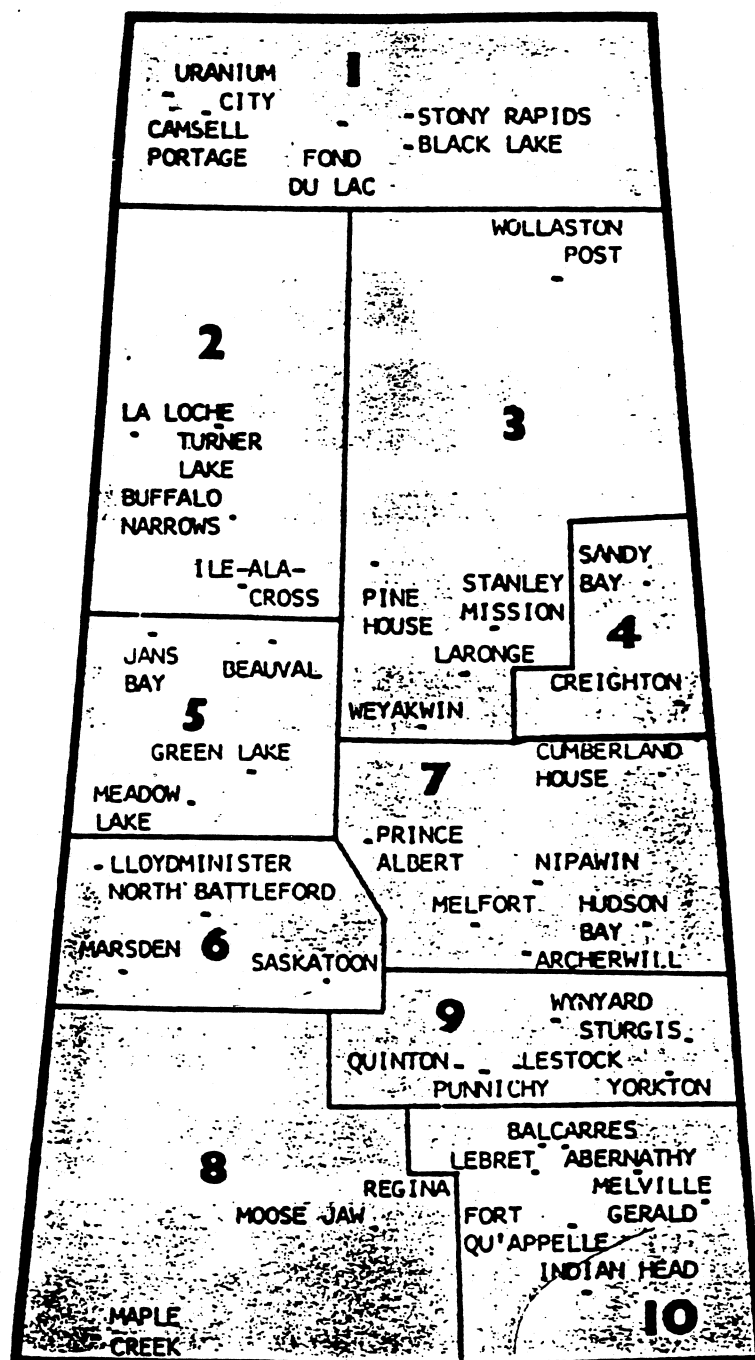
Map of Canada (AWCS Newsletter: 1992:20)

FOUR DIRECTIONS**STRUCTURE:**

1. North - Labrador
 - North West Territories
 - Yukon
2. West - British Columbia
 - Alberta
 - Saskatchewan
3. South - Manitoba
 - Ontario
 - Quebec
4. East - New Brunswick
 - Nova Scotia
 - Prince Edward Island



The Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan



APPENDIX D Primary Sources: Interviews

The following set of questions was used throughout my research as a guide in interviews. Informants were numbered and their responses recorded accordingly. The following was always stated, orally or in writing, to the informants at the beginning of the interview: "The purpose of this survey is to explore the status of Aboriginal women". There were blanks at the top of the question sheet so that informants could fill in their occupations, ages, educational and cultural backgrounds and sign their names if they wished to do so. Many did not do so. Each question will be stated and all responses to a question will be recorded accordingly.

The first eight informants filled out a questionnaire and seven were part of a Women Studies group. Their responses are unedited. The responses from Number 9 on include Aboriginal women involved in various Aboriginal women's groups and have been taken from taped interviews: therefore, some editing was necessary. Consensus was apparent because at times only one person would respond in a joint/group interview, therefore, there might be a discrepancy in the numbers of responses recorded.

1. What is the role of Aboriginal women in your community?
 - (#1) Aboriginal women play a very minor role in most communities.
 - (#2) In mainstream society, they participate in roles similar to that of 'white' women.
 - (#3) Housewife

- (#4) Family supporters, nurses, teachers, secretaries, welfare recipients, medicine woman.
- (#5) Traditional women - women ages 55-over - sedentary lifestyle - lack of exercise - non-drinkers and smokers - go to feasts grandchildren to look after - cook and clean house - less stressed out - respected - involved with gatherings in community - some bingo players - traditional and European religion (mixed) - Old Age Pension - welfare.
- (#6) The center of the family - nucleus.
- (#7) The older woman (40+-over) stay home and are more into the old Indian ways like - looking after grandchildren - practice religious beliefs and customs. The younger women - have kids - are losing their religious beliefs and customs - are more into 'whitemens' ways.
- (#8) They should run the Band system because they are getting more education. (This person answered the questions prepared for males/leaders/representatives, which read, "As an Aboriginal leader and representative what role do you believe Aboriginal women should play in the community?"). All other questions remained the same as for the others.
- (#9) Becoming educated.
- (#10) In many areas, mainly in social programs and as elders.
- (#11) (Does not know about reserve life but in urban centers she sees some Aboriginal women holding high positions in

their own Aboriginal organizations and very involved in improving the quality of life).

- (#12) Aboriginal women are being pushed in the background because of laws imposed by whitemen which have now been adopted by some of the Aboriginal leadership.
- (#13) (Believes position of Aboriginal women is undermined by the dominant society which tends to look down on Aboriginal people).
- (#14) (In her northern community more Aboriginal women are working outside the home and also attending educational institutions, by mutual agreement many men help with babysitting and as caregivers).
- (#15) There is a tendency for Aboriginal women to seek higher levels of education and many are in dominant positions in their communities.
- (#16) Many Aboriginal women are involved in many areas (healing circles, education, elders, role models in their communities).
- (#17) Aboriginal women are becoming involved and aggressive in all areas, traditional roles have been diminished by residential schools and churches.
- (#18) (On her reserve traditional roles for women and men are maintained).
- (#19) (Women are very active in band meetings on her reserve).
- (#20) Many Aboriginal women are in leadership positions on her reserve which is under Band Custom.

2. Are the Aboriginal organizations male-dominated, if so, why are Aboriginal women no more involved politically? If not, why not?
- (#1) No, because Aboriginal women are still oppressed today because they are women and because they are Aboriginal.
- (#2) Unsupported by Aboriginal males who are leaders in the Aboriginal communities.
- (#3) Yes, because it is a male dominated world.
- (#4) Yes. We are not in a stage of change yet. I would like to see more Native women leaders.
- (#5) Chief and Council - male, Band Office Staff - male/female, Medical Staff - male/female, Teachers - mostly female, Bus Drivers - mostly male, Janitorial and Maintenance - male/female.
- Women are not involved more politically because women are out getting their degrees in Social Work, Bachelors of Education, etc.
- (#6) Aboriginal women are politically involved but seldom heard.
- (#7) Yes, the women (and most old men) in our community are stuck in the old ways where men are involved in running the band but some women were in involved in politics but rarely.
- (#8) Yes, traditional culture, family domination in the bands.

- (#9) Yes, but not all Aboriginal men are at fault. (She is concerned about the direction Aboriginal leadership has taken, believes European patriarchal system has been adopted but says the Indian Act is responsible in dictating the lives of Aboriginal people).
- (#10) Says situations vary.
- (#11) Yes, women need to be heard.
- (#12) Chief and council dominate over both sexes. Aboriginal women are more involved socially.
- (#13) There is more need for democracy in Indian band self-governments, says it's too hierarchical at present, says urban Indians are very politically oppressed by own Indian governments.
- (#14) Believes all Aboriginal organizations are losing direction and following policies of bureaucrats.
- (#15) Says only a minority of males (leadership) tend to dominate, have adopted white ways.
- (#16) Says Aboriginal women are nucleus of the community, at the grassroots level. Aboriginal men tend to become more politically involved because women's role in the community requires them to stay in their home community.
- (#17) Says that, politically, Native men are more dominant but that Native women are more dominant socially, however, would like to see more women becoming involved politically.

(#18) Believes that off-reserve there is less dominance but on the reserve, men seem to dominate.

3. Should Aboriginal women be encouraged to become more involved in politics, economic development, in social planning - preservation of culture, religion, education, and so on?

(#1) Yes, we need to fight to become more involved in our welfare.

(#2) Definitely.

(#3) Yes because they are better educated than the men.

(#4) Yes, they should. In the past they were involved in these areas and life was good.

(#5) I feel there are alot of women already involved, not necessarily in politics, but in other portfolios. Not all women want to be Kim Campbell. Further, women that stay at home should be encouraged to finish their education, especially the younger people.

(#6) Yes, the more they learn the better.

(#7) Yes, because women can do anything they put their minds to.

(#8) Yes, they are after all the home providers, volunteers in community, make life.

(#9) Yes. The future of the children is important, also traditional ways are important.

(#10) Yes, in all areas including economic development.

- (#11) Yes, in restoration of traditional Native beliefs, values and traditions which have been lost to persons attending residential schools and the youth, also the issue of sexuality needs to be addressed.
- (#12) Yes, in all aspects of community development.
- (#13) Yes, women should bring out issue of former cases of sexual abuse in residential schools because this issue is responsible for many suicides (leadership not addressing this).
- (#14) Yes, in all aspects, especially in economic development because there is a need to ensure an economic base for future generations. Also there is a need to instill traditional values and beliefs in the young, for example, respect.
- (#15) Would like to see Aboriginal women more involved in politics.
- (#16) (Has not paid much attention to anything in particular and did not really have an opinion but believes many Aboriginal women are involved already).
- (#17) yes, in all areas for our benefit (welfare).
- (#18) Yes, many are now involved, young should be encouraged.
- (#19) Yes.
- (#20) Definitely.

4. Do you believe that Aboriginal women should be involved in the feminist (women's) movement?

- (#1) Yes, because women (no matter what race they are) should fight for their rights.
- (#2) Yes.
- (#3) Why not.
- (#4) I don't know the answer.
- (#5) It is all up to the individual.
- (#6) No
- (#7) Yes women should be involved in our future children's destinations and future.
- (#8) They do have a right to speak out.
- (#9) (Perceives feminists as "men bashers" but believes feminists can be given support on some issues. Identifies herself as an activist but not as a feminist).
- (#10) (Does not oppose feminism involvement but says racism needs to be addressed as well and that we need to support each other).
- (#11) (Says feminist movement is a start, however, both #s 10 and 11 do not identify themselves as feminists).
- (#12) A definite "no", says feminists cannot speak on behalf of Aboriginal women and cannot address or help with racism. Gave several reasons why Aboriginal women should have their own movement because "we" have our own belief system. Does not agree with many things feminists say or do.
- (#13) No, feminists do not honor womanhood.

- (#14) No, Aboriginal women should have own movement, does not want to become brainwashed.
- (#15) Says one should know oneself before becoming involved.
- (#16) No, because feminists are way behind Aboriginal women, they want what Aboriginal women had (autonomy).
- (#17) No, we have to follow our grandmothers with prayers and to honor motherhood.
- (#18) No, not necessarily, Aboriginal women need own political arena, not seeking same type of equality as feminists.
- (#19) (Has no opinion, says not familiar with feminist movement, says self-government and self-dependence probably more important to Native women).
- (#20) Has no opinion, is only mildly aware of feminists.

5. Could you share your views about the relationship that exists between Aboriginal people and nature?

- (#1) Nature is sacred to Aboriginal people as it should be to all people.
- (#2) There is a close connection between their spirituality and nature as well as their physical livelihood and nature.
- (#3) ?
- (#4) Interrelated, co-existence, at one with nature.
- (#5) Many Aboriginal people are going back to the old ways on our reserve. Traditional values are back i.e.) sweat lodges for spiritual, mental and physical healing. Many

Aboriginal people blame the European culture for destroying mother earth, i.e.) depletion of the ozone layer, oil spills, smog, etc.

- (#6) Children are our purpose in life. Motherhood is the most important role in society.
- (#7) I believe that Native have a respect for nature and its balance. I believe that women are the center of the universe because if it wasn't for women, mankind wouldn't exist. Native people's lives are surrounded by the way nature is, for example, they need nature for food, medicine and shelter.
- (#8) Yes, I'm a fisherman, speak Cree, know my legends.
- (#9) There is a need to living in harmony with the four sacred elements in accordance with the Four Directions.
- (#10) Traditional values are important.
- (#11) Says we need to restore the harmonious relationship with Mother Earth, the youth need to be taught old values and spirituality.
- (#12) A return to spirituality is important. Says the concept of motherhood is very important to Aboriginal people.
- (#13) One informant spoke for the group, says their group all very traditional women who believe in Native spirituality and harmony with nature. Motherhood should be honored and Mother Earth respected. (I asked if anyone else had anything else to add, there was no response).

- (#14) (Says that at every meeting she has attended nationally, people always talk about Mother Earth, the Four Directions and Elements, and that ceremonies reinforce values and beliefs). Ceremonies held outdoors make you feel close to nature and that "motherhood" is very important.
- (#15) Native people are the protectors of Mother Earth, the Creator gave us the right to keep the land clean.
- (#16) Aboriginal people believe they are part of nature and nature is a part of them.
6. Are amendments to the Indian Act, for example Bill C-31, harmful or beneficial to Indian people?
- (#1) Beneficial but harmful in the long run - Aboriginal people will become "extinct" in the long run with Bill C-31.
- (#2) Harmful.
- (#3) It depends on who you ask treaty or non treaty.
- (#4) They should change that crappy Indian Act. It stops Aboriginal growth.
- (#5) Bill C-31 people have a hard time adjusting to reserve life and will continue to have long term problems.
- (#6) To some extent Bill C-31 is harmful to Native women and their children because of the cut-off line.
- (#7) I believe they (amendments) are beneficial because many of the Indians in Bill C-31 lost their rights unjustly.

I think the Indian Act is useful and beneficial to Indian people to a point but if they keep trying to use the Act just so they don't have to work for the things they want isn't right.

- (#8) Harmful.
- (#9) (Says she was very active in bringing about changes to the Indian Act, however, believes that amendments have brought more discrimination towards reinstated Aboriginal women within Aboriginal communities).
- (#10) Dislikes different labels given to Aboriginal people, e.g. Bill C-31, etc.
- (#11) Believes Bill C-31 is bad legislation, has hurt Aboriginal people more than helped, more discrimination towards Bill C-31 members by band members.
- (#12) Says urban Indians are politically oppressed by the Indian Act.
- (#13) Says Indian Act is oppressive.
- (#14) Bill C-31 could be useful as nation building for First Nations.
- (#15) Indian Act is only useful as proof of colonial process and what Natives have gone through.
- (#16) Says Indian Act is all we have now; more or less have to live with it unless something better comes along. Bill C-31 is useful but not without problems - did end discrimination to some degree. She is surprised that Bill C-31 has become such a problem for some in western

Canada. She says that on her reserve which is under custom law there is no discrimination based on residency and that Bill C-31 members do not have same problems as in western Canada.

- (#17) Beneficial but harmful in the long-run. Believes Aboriginal people will become extinct in the long-run with Bill C-31.
- (#18) Harmful.
- (#19) Does not care for Bill C-31 because it devalues the reserve with so many "halves", only good for those who lost status.
- (#20) As a Bill C-31 member says there is discrimination at the band level.

7. What is the relationship between Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men? Does one tend to dominate the other or are they more or less on an equal footing?

- (#1) I see today's relationships as the women fighting for every inch they get. They must fight to be equal.
- (#2) Domination of Aboriginal women by Aboriginal men.
- (#3) This depends on the reserve.
- (#4) In my family my dad is sort of dominant even though my mom is a teacher. But each has a role the rest of society will not understand.
My relationship is almost equal. I wouldn't want to disobey my girlfriend, she's important to me.

- (#5) It's changing, women are more independent than they were in the early 60's and late 70's. I would say the women are on an equal footing as the men.
- (#6) We hope we are on equal footing.
- (#7) The Aboriginal men dominate the women in our community just to an extent. The women are supposed to clean house, look after the kids, etc., but the men do that sometimes. As to the decision in the relationships they are on equal footing.
- (#8) Not equal, society.
- (#9) (Her own personal relationship is not abusive or male-dominated, believes this is due to her strong personality).
- (#10) Men are more dominant and with more authority over family matters.
- (#11) Says it depends on group of Aboriginal people, believes Metis women are very dominant.
- (#12) (The women are dominant in her family).
- (#13) (She said it was the same for her family, women are dominant).
- (#14) (Says it is still very traditional in her family as well).
- (#15) (Says that only male leadership tends to be dominant, a minority who have adopted whiteman's ways).
- (#16) Cannot believe that either sex is that dominant.

- (#17) (Believes that Native men treat non-Aboriginal women better and vice-versa but that some can be abusive).
- (#18) (Says that amongst her relatives she found both sides equally "bossy").

8. Are Aboriginal women oppressed? If so, what oppresses them the most? If not, why not?

- (#1) Yes, because they are women and Aboriginal. They are oppressed by Aboriginal and White men. If you're a man, no matter if you are Aboriginal or not, I feel that this society sees men as better than females.
- (#2) Yes, they are.
- (#3) Yes, male dominance.
- (#4) Yes, men, jobs, society, ignorance.
- (#5) Aboriginal women are oppressed because there is no mode of transportation on reserves. Getting from point A to point B is difficult. Not everyone has a car on the reserve.
- (#6) Poverty - education.
- (#7) Yes - lack of education - early pregnancies.
- (#8) Yes. The social norms of the Eurocentric point of view.
- (#9) Says Indian Act bears much of the responsibility for way Indian women have been treated. Aboriginal leadership adopted European patriarchal system and has undermined Aboriginal women's former positions.

- (#10) (Believes Aboriginal women more oppressed in Northern communities because of isolation, lack of resources and transportation. When Aboriginal people move to the urban centers new problems arise; racism, classism, lack of family support system and unfamiliarity).
- (#11) Seemed in agreement with informant #10.
- (#12) Aboriginal women are more oppressed in the urban centers than in their home communities because of conflict of cultures, racism, classism, poverty, alcoholism. Also other women (white) in higher positions tend to oppress Aboriginal women (gave example of her own experience).
- (#13) Aboriginals are more oppressed in urban centers both by their own Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments. Off-reserve Indians do not get same privileges as on-reserve residents. Also says that women can oppress other women as well, based on her own experience.
- (#14) Says a support system is needed in the city because many problems are faced by urban Indians. Believe urban Indians are very oppressed in many ways.
- (#15) Believes urban Indians are more oppressed with more difficulties. Says they are oppressed by a combination of things and cannot identify one thing only. Also says if we are oppressed as women, it is our own fault and thinking. Cannot say we are oppressed because we have a voice, a channel. If Aboriginal women's groups are cut off from funding them would say Aboriginal women are

oppressed. She does not like the term "oppressed" but prefers "victimized."

(#16) Urban Indians are probably more oppressed than those on the reserve because they have no input on anything.

(#17) As an urban Indian she feels that she was discriminated against more because of her race than her sex, says racism is all over. However, she believes life in the city is better than on the reserve.

9. Which sex appears more oppressed in the urban centers/or on the reserves? Why do you think this is so?

(#1) On both - females are more oppressed because men are seen as better than females - no matter what the race is.

(#2) In urban centers both sexes are oppressed, while on reserves women are more oppressed since men are dominating.

(#3) ?

(#4) Women, society doesn't want to change. Women's views are also not changing too.

(#5) Both sexes appear oppressed in both places because of no educational background, no jobs, racism in urban centers, welfare, poor housing, etc. It's a vicious cycle for Aboriginal people. In order to get out of this cycle an individual has to get off his damn ass, finish school and work.

(#6) Women - lack of day care and education.

- (#7) Women. I believe they are more oppressed in the urban centers because they don't have the family support like on reserves.
- (#8) Women, society does not want to change.
- (#9) Aboriginal people have to try twice as hard in the urban centers, sometimes it is harder for women than men but not always.
- (#10) On the reserve, same problems do not apply. Some band governments are made up of relatives so "who you are" does have an impact.
- (#11) Many problems are encountered in urban life, e.g. poor housing, loneliness, and racial discrimination in many forms.
- (#12) Both sexes are equally oppressed in different ways: racism, classism and poverty lead to other societal problems such as alcoholism and prostitution.
- (#13) Clashes in cultures in urban centers. Aboriginal women are at the forefront fighting this oppression by bringing in healing circles and reinforcing Aboriginal values through their own spirituality and naturalness as women.
- (#14) Everyone is oppressed but Aboriginal women are stronger.
- (#15) There is more oppression and sadness in urban centers because of the loss of culture.
- (#16) Alcoholism is a problem because of the pressure to be like the dominant society.

- (#17) Says some individuals are wasting away in urban centers and just sit at home smoking.
- (#18) Life is better on the reserve, lots of fresh air and things to do.
- (#19) (This informant does not believe "oppressed" is appropriate in describing or defining Aboriginal women's roles).
- (#20) In terms of race, Aboriginal people in Canada are oppressed. Says there is no input with regard to decision-making by the federal government. Calls this an "attitude" problem.

10. What do you envision or hope to see happening in the future for Aboriginal people?

- (#1) I hope to see them have self-government and in control of what happens to them.
- (#2) Self-government and education, including cultural values.
- (#3) More women leaders.
- (#4) Jobs, equality, self sufficiency, regeneration in cultures, education, better health.
- (#5) There are alot of positive things happening on our reserve with the Indian self-government in place. In the near future we don't have to travel to Prince Albert for shopping, entertainment, laundry, doctor, etc.
- (#6) Unity.

- (#7) I hope that the future children could better themselves and their (Native) plight that is happening now.
- (#8) We have to hope in a better future, that's all we can do to get change.
- (#9) (Would like to see the return of Aboriginal women's former positions in Aboriginal societies. Although Aboriginal self-government is important she feels Aboriginal societies need this healing before it becomes a reality, especially with the leadership). Wonders when people will "wake up".
- (#10) (Would like Aboriginal women to set differences (labels) aside and work together to address racism, sexism and classism which are more prevalent for Natives in urban centers).
- (#11) Did not add anything to #10's response.
- (#12) (Would like FSIN to establish offices in the city to deal with the urban Indians. At present the tribal councils deal mainly with education and are not adequate. Also believes that although self-government is desirable she does not feel that Aboriginal people are ready yet, e.g. administrative abilities).
- (#13) (Wants revival of Aboriginal values, beliefs and traditions especially with respect to one's sexuality and spirituality. Also says there is a need for more democracy for urban Indians with their own band governments).

- (#14) (Wants equal treatment for urban Indians by their own band governments).
- (#15) All privileges should apply to registered Indians regardless of their residency.
- (#16) The right to control our own destinies.
- (#17) Self-government is a goal but at present everyday matters need to be addressed. Also the younger generation needs to learn basic survival skills and responsibilities.
- (#18) (Would like the attitudes of Canadians changed. She feels this can be accomplished through education and the curriculum. Feels Native Studies is a good vehicle and should be mandatory in schools. She believes the younger generations can change but not the older. Has mixed feelings about self-government but does not oppose it. Would like to know exactly what self-government means before endorsing it).
- (#19) Would like more Aboriginal people involved in decision-making, for example, the Accord.
- (#20) (Believes that there will be a change in the next generation because of what is being taught in schools and that children will learn about equality, not only about sexism but also racism. She believes education will play a vital role in educating those who discriminate on either basis).

11. What does the term 'feminism' mean to you?

- (#1) Feminism means equal rights for females.
- (#2) It is a movement for women which promotes equality for women.
- (#3) Women.
- (#4) Equality for women.
- (#5) (1) The doctrine that favors more rights and activities for women in their economic, social, political, and private lives. (2) A movement to secure these rights. (3) The quality of females. (4) The presence of specifically feminine characteristics in the males.
- (#6) Not too much, I don't consider myself as a feminist but I strongly believe in equality.
- (#7) Women who expect to get things done for them by men because they don't want to do it.
- (#8) It means equality for women.
- (#9) (Perceives feminists as "men bashers". Says that the Native women's movement is not a sexist or separatist movement but rather a movement for the reaffirmation of Aboriginal women's roles in Aboriginal societies).
- (#10) (Does not consider herself a feminist and likes being a woman. However, she will not tolerate or stay in an abusive relationship, wants dignity and respect).
- (#11) (Says it seems feminism has a thing against men whereas she has been taught differently - that we were put on earth for a reason).

- (#12) (Believes white sisters have different attitudes towards sexuality and focus on male domination as sole oppression).
- (#13) Have not been raised to pick on men and believes that both sexes are oppressed. Says she is not a feminist, believes that feminists want status and power, to be like men.
- (#14) Aboriginal women face many other problems than just sexual, or physical abuse.
- (#15) Her understanding of the term is "not wanting to do anything with men". Feminism refers to a radical group of women who use words like male dominance.
- (#16) Says she does not follow the feminist movement or if feminists are involved with Native women.
- (#17) (What she hears is that white women want equality).
12. In your experience do Aboriginal women suffer from sexual or physical abuse?
- (#1) Yes!
- (#2) Yes.
- (#3) ?
- (#4) Yes.
- (#5) It still happens, but it is hidden. Women try to hide their abuse, but someone squeals on the abuser.
- (#6) Yes.

- (#7) Yes, many of the Native women either suffer from both because that is the only thing they know.
- (#8) Yes. I see it all the time, on T.V., the reserve, the city, I think it affects all women.
- (#9) (Has seen many forms of abuse but not in her own relationship).
- (#10) (Knows of many acts of violence and prostitution amongst inner City youth and that pimps are a problem).
- (#11) (Says many things are revealed in healing circles but are told and held in confidence).
- (#12) Some gave personal and non-personal accounts of sexual abuse (mostly flashbacks) but were mainly concerned about the victims who suffered abuse at the hands of residential school administrators and staff.
- (#13) (Says abuse comes in many forms and has heard many stories but has not experienced it personally).

Only two persons (#'s 6 and 7) in the first group received the form that contained (#13), an additional question.

- 13. Are women's and men's roles divided on the basis of sex in Indigenous societies? If so, can you explain why?
- (#6) Answered with a ?
- (#7) Yes, there are roles in our culture that separates them, for example, men are only allowed to do religious practices while the women are in the background.

- (#9) Traditional Aboriginal women had own roles in own societies.
- (#10) Believes in traditional values and beliefs and was raised accordingly, therefore, accepts her role as a woman.
- (#11) Accepts her role as a woman and say that at birth your destiny is determined and that you are raised accordingly.
- (#12) (In her family, the father defined roles which were not necessarily based on sex. Says different skills determined a person's task and that family members took turns assuming responsibility for raising younger siblings when they were old enough. The most noticeable division of labor to her was in the ceremonies where men were and still are the servers).
- (#13) (Believes that Aboriginal women do have their own roles based on sex)...

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